WEEK 7 FEBRUARY · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Hand & Power Tool Safety

A grinder kicks back, a worn chisel slips, a cord frays against a sharp edge. Tools are in our hands every day, which is exactly why the habits go slack — and that's when fingers, eyes, and hands get hurt.

The hazard

Power tools spin and cut fast and don't care what's in the way. Damaged cords and tools shock or start fires. Hand tools that are dull, cracked, or used for the wrong job slip and stab. In the cold, stiff hands and bulky gloves make a slip more likely. The protection you need isn't one fixed kit — it depends on what the specific tool throws at you.

What to do

- **Match the eye and face protection to the task.** Ontario's rule is protection appropriate to the risk, not one pair of glasses for everything. Grinding and cutting need suitable safety eyewear **plus** a face shield — the shield protects your face and does not replace the glasses underneath. Dust and splash may call for goggles that seal.
- **Pick gloves for the task, and keep them away from anything rotating.** A glove that catches in a spinning bit or wheel pulls your hand in with it. There are tools you don't wear gloves near at all.
- **Follow the tool's instructions and use the parts it came with** — the guard, the side handle, the auxiliary grip. If a tool is designed for two grips, use both; that's a design rule, not a universal one.
- **Check accessories, not just the tool.** Wheel, blade, or bit undamaged, correctly seated, and **rated for at least the tool's speed**. A wheel spun past its rating comes apart.
- Inspect before use: guards in place, cords and plugs intact, housings sound, bits and blades sharp and tight.
- **Isolate before you adjust.** Unplug it or take the battery out before changing a blade or bit, clearing a jam, or making an adjustment. A trigger doesn't count as isolation.
- Let a tool stop completely before you set it down, and don't carry it by the cord.
- Tag damaged tools and get them off the job so nobody picks one up by mistake.

Watch out for

- Frayed or taped-up cords and cracked housings — out of service, not "one more cut."
- Loose clothing, lanyards, long sleeves, or gloves near a spinning bit or wheel.
- Kickback on grinders and saws — firm grip, body out of the line the tool will travel.
- A guard swung back or wired open because it was in the way.

Talk it over

- What's the tool here most likely to hurt someone today, and what protection does that specific job need?
- How do we flag and remove a broken tool so nobody grabs it out of the truck tomorrow?

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