

HAZARDS USING PORTABLE POWERED TOOLS

There have been at least two instances recently where portable powered grinders or cutting wheels have been found in use on Santos USA Corp sites without guards fitted. Operating these tools and saws without proper guarding is a breach of OSHA Regulation 29 CFR 1910.243 – Guarding of Portable Powered Tools.

The act of operating these tools without guards is also an extremely hazardous act which has resulted in death and serious injury on numerous occasions within the Oil and Gas Industry.

By way of example:

- Recently a welder suffered a laceration to the arm requiring stitches after losing control of a nine inch grinder when the unguarded cutting blade apparently was pinched by the pipe being cut. The tool was being used to cut a 6 inch pipe located in a bell hole. The incident could easily have resulted in an amputated arm. Quick thinking on the part of the injured worker during the incident prevented a co-worker standing nearby from also being seriously injured by the out-of-control grinder.
 - An air-powered angle grinder was being used to cut grooves into cast iron with a cut-off wheel. The unguarded cut-off wheel fractured during use and a large fragment of the wheel went through the worker's face shield and into the worker's face. The worker died as a result of the injury.
 - Similarly, a welder using an unguarded electric powered 6" cutting disk was fatally injured when an incorrect disc was in use and the disc fractured causing a piece of the disc to strike his face killing him instantly.
- Never use a powered tool unless you are competent in its use.
 - Never use a grinding/cutting tool without its guard in place.
 - Always secure the work piece so that it can't move during the task.
 - There are hundreds of different types of wheels and discs – make sure the correct one is used for the task. The RPM of the machine must not exceed the RPM of the wheel/disc (and the peripheral speed of the disc), and the wheel bore and machine arbour must match.
 - Never use a cutting-off wheel for grinding – the sideways force will break the disc.
 - Don't use a damaged disk or wheel – watch for cracks or chips.
 - Be gentle – let the tool do the job – don't apply excessive pressure.
 - Always wear goggles, medium impact face shield and hearing protection.
 - Take the time to read and follow the manufacturer's instructions of the wheel or disc being used – don't use after the 'use-by' date has expired.
 - Transport discs and wheels carefully to avoid damage.
 - Store wheels and discs in dry conditions.
 - Clear others from the work area in case the wheel or disc shatters causing numerous high speed projectiles.

Remember:

- ALWAYS select the correct tool for the job – go the low risk way.
- ALWAYS use a **JHA** and **Stepback** before starting any job.
- ALWAYS take the time to do the job properly.
- NEVER take shortcuts – it can happen to you!
- NEVER rush a job – take the time to do it well, once.

“We all go home from work without injury or illness”

