

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older

#93 SAFE USE OF POWER SANDERS



According to U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission data, approximately 1,300 people received hospital treatment for power sander injuries during 2009. Most injuries involved lacerations and punctures to fingers and hands. Other injuries included foreign bodies in the eye and hand and finger contusions. Most of these power sander injuries were due to operator error or inattention and could have been avoided.

Pre-Use Activities

- Thoroughly review and understand information provided in the power sander operator's manual with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Before using, always inspect the power sander for damage or disrepair. In addition, assure belts, pads, or discs are undamaged and properly secured, tensioned, and/or tracking. Inspect the electrical cord and plug for defects.
- If the power sander fails your inspection, inform your group leader, parent, or guardian and remove it from use until it can be repaired.

Operating Precautions

- Always wear a face shield or safety glasses and a dust mask when using a portable sander. As appropriate, wear suitable hearing protection.
- Prior to starting, replace worn or torn belt, pad, or disc sand paper. Select the proper-sized sanding grit for the type of sanding task to be performed.
- Always assure that the power switch is in the off position before plugging in the sander power cord.
- Where possible, secure work stock with a vise or clamps. Secure small or irregular shaped pieces in a hand clamp, or make a special jig or fixture to hold them
- Always turn the sander on before placing it in contact with the work stock and keep the sander moving to prevent burning while sanding.
- Firmly hold the sander by gripping both handles.
- Keep the sander power cord away from the sanding work stock.
- Do not use a power sander to do the job of a router or other more appropriate tool.
- While sanding, keep your hands and fingers clear of the sanding belt, pad, or disc.
- Avoid pushing down on the sander to reduce the possibility of sander or work stock kickback.
- Sand only clean, new wood. Sanding work stock that has excess glue or finish will ruin the abrasive.
- Do not yank on the power cord to disconnect the sander.
- Always turn the power switch off and disconnect the power cord before changing sand paper or adjusting belts, pads, or discs.
- When finished, clean up saw dust and dispose of in trash.
- If you are injured by a power sander, notify your project leader, parent, or guardian. Seek medical attention if the injury is serious.

Special Stationary Belt Sander Precautions

- When sanding the end grain of narrow pieces, always support the work against the worktable.
- Feed the wood directly against the sanding belt. Never feed from the left or right it may catch and cause the belt to rip off.

Special Stationary Disc Sander Precautions

- Never operate a disc sander if the sanding paper is loose. Make sure the adhesive is holding the sanding disc tightly to the platen.
- Sand only on the side of the disc sander that is moving downward toward the table. Check the direction of the disc rotation.

Note: Clover Safe #93 was developed from information provided by Richard Mahacek, County Director and 4-H Advisor, Merced County Cooperative Extension.