



### **Lessons Learned: Power Tools**

**Background:** A member Authority suffered a severe workers' compensation loss when a circular saw used by an employee kicked back, nearly severing the employee's thumb. Significant lessons can be taken from this incident that could prevent a similar incident at other Authorities.

#### **Proximate Cause:**

The circular saw was the improper tool for the task being performed. The saw was being used to cut a hand-held piece of wood, without the use of saw horses or other bracing. The manual for this tool specifically notes the proper use of the tool and situations to be avoided. A miter saw would have been the more appropriate tool for the task.

#### **Secondary Causes:**

- **Consistent Accident Investigation** – Any employee injury should trigger a comprehensive examination of the accident circumstances, not just for claim reporting, but for development of strategies to prevent future injuries.
- **Training/Reinforcement** – While it is often assumed that experienced employees have adequate knowledge to complete routine tasks, they may have fallen into bad habits as time has passed. Conduct training on a regular basis (The NJPHA-JIF, MEL, and PMA all provide materials and personnel for training). Use tool manuals and NJPHA safety bulletins as subject matter for regular toolbox talk meetings. Post meeting, conduct observations of employees and create the expectation that the principles in the training are to be utilized on the job. This is critical for employees who frequently are working alone. If deviations are observed, immediate coaching should take place; if repeated violations of trained practices are observed, disciplinary measures should be utilized. Don't expect training to be effective if the proper tools/equipment are not available, or the assigned task cannot be performed using safe work practices. Respond to employee requests for changes in procedures or additional equipment.
- **Job Hazard Analysis** – Any task requiring personal protective equipment(PPE) should have a multiple step hazard analysis performed. This should break down the task into a sequence of steps and identify the hazards involved. This will point to appropriate PPE and provide a coaching and training tool for new employees and refresher toolbox meetings.
- **Tool Inspection** – Any power tool should be routinely inspected before its use to be sure that guards are in place and functional, and electric cord are not frayed or broken. Damaged tools should be immediately taken out of service for repair, or be replaced.

Remember that the injury costs incurred by your Authority not only impact your costs, but those of all your fellow members.

For more information, contact your risk management consultant, or NJPHA-JIF safety director, Jim Rhoads at 610-937-2694 or by e-mail at [james\\_rhoads@pmagroup.com](mailto:james_rhoads@pmagroup.com).

**IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by PMA Insurance Group in this risk control technical guide are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related or other laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter the information and suggestions to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.**