



Safe Use of Reciprocating Saws

Portable reciprocating saws are powerful, versatile tools that use thin, flat, narrow blades that, depending on the application requirements, come in assorted lengths and tooth-sets. Reciprocating saws are not difficult to use but their intended purpose prohibits the use of a blade guard. The open blade design allows the application of powerful cutting potential in cramped and restricted spaces. With the proper blade, they can cut metal, wood, and plastic material. They are invaluable for trimming out mechanical chases for fitting HVAC ductwork, drain lines, supply lines, or electrical components where other power tools will not work. Sawzall-type reciprocating saws require both hands to operate safely and the nature of the tool makes precision cuts difficult.

Main Points

- Do not allow anyone to use a saw that has not been properly instructed and approved in the processes of its safe operation.
- Be familiar with your power tools. When using a new saw, or one that is foreign to you, take some time to “test-run” it and get a feel for its performance. Read and understand the operator’s manual and follow its instructions. Prior to its use, do a visual and operational inspection to ensure safe mechanical function of the saw.
- Eye protection is extremely important and must always be worn when using a reciprocating saw. When operations present potential eye injuries, adequate and appropriate protection must be selected. Use a face shield, protective goggles, or approved safety glasses depending on the job performed.
- Hearing protection is required due to the extreme noise levels generated, especially during extended cutting sessions.
- Depending on the material being cut, gloves can be helpful and a dust mask may be required.
- Wear clothing appropriate with reciprocating saw use; avoid long, loose shirtsleeves, neckwear, or untied long hair.
- Check that spring-loaded on/off trigger switch functions properly.

- Unsafe practices and inadequate housekeeping create potentially dangerous work-zones; keep the work area free of trip hazards such as tangled power cords, cluttered material, scraps, stones, bricks, or other obstacles and obstructions.
- Operate only properly maintained equipment; Check the blade to be sure that it is clean, straight, sharp, and the set screw is tight.
- Carefully examine the workpiece to be cut for knots, nails, or other objects that could cause a hazardous situation.
- During cuts, keep blade speeds at recommended levels; over-pressure on cuts will create hazardous situations.
- If any operational problems are noted, remove the saw from service and get it repaired immediately.
- When repairing tools, or changing blades, always disconnect the power source. ☒ Avoid using power tools in a wet environment.
- When not in use, store the saw in a dry, secure location.

Reciprocating saws are an excellent accessory to any operation that requires cutting. If good sense and caution are not used, these saws can cause serious injury. Follow these safety guidelines to avoid hazardous situations.

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