

Safety Note #44

## MITER AND CHOP SAW SAFETY



Photograph Courtesy of  
Sierra Foothill REC

According to U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission data, approximately 13,500 people nationwide received hospital treatment for power saw injuries during 2003. Of this total, about 70% of the injuries involved fingers and hands. California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 8, Section 4307.1 addresses miter and chop saw safety. CCR Title 8, Section 3203 (7) requires employees be trained on the equipment they use in the workplace. **Video E-061 Saws/Grinder/Drill Press Instruction is available from the ANR Environmental Health and Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.org>.**

### Pre-Use Activities

- Thoroughly review and understand information provided in the miter or chop saw operator's manual with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Before using, always inspect the miter or chop saw for damage or disrepair. In addition, assure the saw blade is not damaged and properly aligned, movable saw parts are not binding, and the swing arm is functioning correctly. Inspect the electrical cord and plug for defects.
- If a miter or chop saw fails the pre-use inspection, notify your supervisor and remove the saw from service by attaching a red tag that states "DO NOT USE." Complete red tag with appropriate information.

### Operating Precautions

- Always wear industrial-quality safety glasses or a face shield when using a miter or chop saw.
- Do not wear loose fitting clothing or jewelry that can be caught by moving parts. Pull back long hair with a band or wear long hair under a cap.
- As appropriate, wear suitable hearing protection and dust mask.
- Keep saw fences and blade guards in place and functioning properly.
- Assure saw blades are clean, sharp, and correctly set so that they will cut freely without forcing the blade against the work piece.
- Never feed the saw into the work piece at a rate faster than it can accept.
- Keep your fingers and hands at least four inches from a rotating saw blade.
- Prior to sawing, check stock for nails, screws, or other foreign objects.
- Do not attempt to cut pieces of stock that are too small to easily hold with your hands.
- Never make free-hand cuts with a miter or chop saw.
- Firmly brace the work piece against the fence to prevent movement while cutting. When possible, use clamps to secure the work piece.
- Never reach behind, over, or under a saw blade unless it has stopped turning and the power has been disconnected.
- Always disconnect the power source before changing or adjusting the saw blade.
- When finished, clean saw dust and scrap stock from saw table (and floor) and dispose of in trash.