CrewSigned

Grinder Safety Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Grinders are some of the most used tools on our jobs and some of the most dangerous. A wheel spinning at ten thousand revolutions a minute or more can shatter and throw pieces like shrapnel. The tool can kick back and swing into your leg or face. Sparks start fires. And if you take the guard off, there is nothing between that wheel and you.

Start with the wheel. Use the right wheel for the job: grinding wheels for grinding, cutoff wheels for cutting, and the right type for metal, masonry or stone. Never grind with the side of a thin cutoff wheel. Check that the maximum speed printed on the wheel is equal to or higher than the speed on the grinder. A wheel that spins faster than it is rated for can blow apart.

Before you mount a wheel, look it over for cracks, chips and water or oil damage. Do not use a wheel that has been dropped. Make sure it fits the arbor and is tightened with the right flange, not forced. When you start the grinder, hold it away from yourself and others and let it run for a moment at full speed. If a wheel is going to fail, it usually does it in the first minute. Never stand in line with the wheel when it spins up.

Keep the guard on and adjusted so it sits between the wheel and you. Use the side handle and hold the grinder with both hands. Let the tool reach full speed before it touches the work, and do not jam or bend the wheel in the cut, which causes kickback. Clamp your work instead of holding it with one hand.

Wear safety glasses and a face shield, plus hearing protection and gloves. Grinding metal or concrete can put dangerous dust in the air, so use a shroud with a vacuum, water, or a respirator when the job calls for it.

Watch your sparks. Move anything that can burn, and follow the hot work rules. Make sure nobody is standing in the spark path.

Unplug the grinder or remove the battery before you change a wheel. And when you set it down, wait until the wheel has completely stopped.

Discussion questions

1. Is the speed rating on the wheel you are using today higher than the speed of the grinder?

2. Where do sparks from your grinding land, and what is there that could burn or someone who could get hit?

3. When would you switch from a grinder to a saw or other tool for a cut?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1926.303, Abrasive wheels and tools
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.303

SOURCES

Hand and Power Tools (OSHA 3080): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3080.pdf
29 CFR 1910.215, Abrasive wheel machinery: https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.215
OSHA Hand and Power Tools: https://www.osha.gov/hand-power-tools

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

Grinder Safety Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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