CrewSigned

Machine Guarding Toolbox Talk

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

Every machine that cuts, bends, shears, presses, punches or turns can take off a finger, a hand or an arm. Amputations from machines happen in a split second, and they are almost always permanent. Guards are there to keep your body away from the parts of the machine that do that damage.

There are three places to watch on any machine. The point of operation is where the work happens: the blade, the die, the bit. Power transmission parts are the belts, pulleys, chains, gears, shafts and couplings that move energy around the machine. Other moving parts include anything that slides, rotates or reciprocates, like feed rollers and flywheels. If it moves, it can catch you.

A good guard keeps you from reaching the danger zone while the machine is running. It is attached so it cannot be easily removed, it does not create a new hazard like a sharp edge, and it lets you do the job without taking it off. Guards can be fixed covers, interlocks that shut the machine down when opened, light curtains, two-hand controls or barriers. Fan blades within seven feet of the floor need a guard too.

Here are the rules. Never run a machine with a guard missing, loose or tied back. If a guard is broken or gets in the way of the work, stop and tell me. We will fix it or find a better guard, but we will not run without one. Do not reach around, over or under a guard. Do not bypass an interlock or tape down a switch.

When a machine jams, needs cleaning, or needs adjustment inside the guard, shut it down and lock it out first. Many amputations happen to people who reached in to clear a jam on a machine they thought was stopped. Coasting blades and stored pressure can still move.

Dress for the work. Loose sleeves, gloves near rotating parts, jewelry and long hair can be grabbed and pulled in. Know where the emergency stop is on every machine you use, and make sure it works.

Finally, only run machines you have been trained on. If you have not run it before, ask first.

Discussion questions

1. Which machine here has a guard that is damaged, loose or tempting to take off?
2. What do you do, step by step, when this machine jams?
3. Where are the emergency stops on the machines in this area?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1910.212, General requirements for all machines
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.212

SOURCES

OSHA Machine Guarding: https://www.osha.gov/machine-guarding
Safeguarding Equipment and Protecting Employees from Amputations (OSHA 3170): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3170.pdf
NIOSH, Machine Safety in the Workplace: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/machine-safety/about/index.html

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

Machine Guarding Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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