CrewSigned

Nail Gun Safety Toolbox Talk

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

Nail guns make framing and roofing fast, and they cause tens of thousands of injuries every year. Most are puncture wounds to the hands and fingers, but nails have also gone into legs, eyes, skulls and hearts. Research on apprentice carpenters found that a large share of them had been hurt by a nail gun, and a lot of those injuries were never reported.

Start with the trigger, because it makes the biggest difference. A full sequential trigger only fires when you press the tip to the wood first and then pull the trigger, one nail at a time. A contact trigger fires whenever the tip and trigger are both pressed in either order, so if you hold the trigger down and bump the tip, it fires. That is how double fires and accidental shots happen, like when you bump your leg while climbing a ladder or the gun recoils and fires a second nail. The risk of injury with a contact trigger is about twice as high. On our jobs, use the full sequential trigger unless I have told you otherwise for a specific task.

Watch where the nail can go. Nails can go through thin wood or out the side of a board and into your hand, so keep your hand at least twelve inches from where you are nailing. Nails can ricochet off knots, metal straps and hard surfaces. They can miss the edge of the work entirely. Use extra care when you are nailing toenails, working near the edge, or reaching into awkward spots.

Some habits to keep every time. Keep your finger off the trigger when you are not nailing. Never carry the gun with your finger on the trigger, and never point it at yourself or anyone else. Do not bypass or remove the safety tip or tie the trigger down. Disconnect the air hose or remove the battery before you clear a jam, adjust it, hand it off, or leave it. Do not lower it by the hose.

Wear safety glasses with side protection, and hearing protection. Check the tool each day for loose parts and a working safety.

New workers need training and practice before using a nail gun on the job. If you get hurt, even a small nick, report it. Nails can carry dirt and cause infection, and we need to know what went wrong.

Discussion questions

1. What trigger is on the nail gun you are using today, and how can you tell?
2. Where are your hands when you nail near the edge of a board or in a tight spot?
3. What do you do with the nailer before you clear a jam or move to a new spot?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1926.302, Power-operated hand tools
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.302

SOURCES

Nail Gun Safety: A Guide for Construction Contractors (NIOSH 2011-202): https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/publications/numbered/2011-202.html
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

Nail Gun Safety Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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