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UTILITY & TRANSPORTATION CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
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PLAYINGITSAFE

SAFETY SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

PORTABLE GRINDER SAFETY

Portable grinders (e.g., angle grinders, handheld grinders and portable abrasive wheels) are common tools in construction that allow employees to grind, cut, polish and buff materials. These tools are used by most trades.

When working with portable grinders, employees need to consider a number of risks. For instance, portable grinders can cause severe lacerations or amputations should an operator come into contact with exposed abrasive wheels. Furthermore, portable grinders can create potentially dangerous sparks, metal fragments and other projectiles as material is cut or polished.

This guidance provides a number of useful tips employees need to consider in order to remain safe as they use portable grinders.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Portable grinders present a number of safety concerns. To mitigate these concerns:

- Wear the proper personal protective equipment. For portable grinders, safety glasses, face shields and heavy leather gloves are recommended. Additionally, depending on the materials you're working on, respiratory and hearing protection may be needed.
- Ensure the abrasive wheel is rated for the speed of the grinder. Failing to do so can cause the wheel to break apart and create dangerous projectiles.
- Inspect the overall condition of the grinder before use. This includes ensuring the electrical cord is in good condition.
- Examine the abrasive wheel for damage before use. In addition, when using a new disc or wheel, let the grinder get up to speed and run for one minute before grinding, looking for abnormal vibrations.
- Use portable grinders per the manufacturer's recommendations. Above all, the portable grinder and wheel you use should be appropriate for the task at hand.
- Ensure guards are in place before using portable grinders. Never make any modifications to the guard.
- Follow existing job site policies, including hot work procedures. This is particularly important, as sparks immitted from portable grinders can create fire hazards. As such, never use portable grinders near combustible materials.
- Use both hands when using a portable grinder.
- Ensure that the work material being grinded is properly secured.
- Follow company procedures related to reducing silica exposure if you are grinding any type of silica-containing material such as concrete, stone or mortar. Such procedures can include using tools that wet material and reduce dust or capture dust via a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum.

For any questions or concerns regarding portable grinders, talk to your supervisor.

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