

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Table Saw Safety



MISSISSIPPI STATE  
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According to statistics, there are an average of 31,500 table saw related injuries each year. It was also revealed in this study that 565,670 non-occupational table saw injuries were treated in hospital emergency rooms from 1990 to 2009.

Two-thirds of the injuries suffered were lacerations, most often to the finger or thumb. Approximately 10 percent of the cases involved amputation. In 72 percent of the cases kickback was the cause of the injury. Some of the less common types of injuries were from flying debris, moving the saw and articles of clothing getting caught in the blade.

Following are some safety tips that can help us protect ourselves from being one of these statistics:

- **Do not wear gloves while operating a table saw.** It is possible for gloves to get caught in the blade and you don't have the grip power or control of the material as well when wearing gloves.
- **Keep the floor in front of the saw free of cut-offs and piled up sawdust.** The odds are greater that you could trip on the cutoffs or slip on the piles of sawdust.
- **Wear proper eye and hearing protection.** Eyes need to be protected from projectiles. Standard eyeglasses won't work. As much as eye protection is needed in woodworking, hearing protection is just as important. Hearing loss creeps up on you without you being conscience of it.
- **Wear short sleeves. Leave the ties in the office and hold off on the dangling jewelry.** Refrain from wearing loose fitting clothing when doing table saw projects. It is very easy for clothing and jewelry to get caught in the rotating blade. It will probably get you caught in that same blade.
- **Stand comfortably, with your feet far enough apart for good balance.** Keep your feet flat on the floor and maintain good balance. Wear good shoes with non-slip heels and soles.
- **Always disconnect the power before changing the blade or performing maintenance operations.**
- **Check the material before starting to cut.** Look for nails, screws, etc. Obviously, these things can cause injury to you and damage the blade.
- **Keep the blade guards, splitters and anti-kickback fingers in place and operating freely.**

- **Avoid any awkward operations.** If you feel like you're in a goofy or awkward position, step back and get into a comfortable and workable solution. Otherwise, you might get off-balance and fall into the table or rotating blade, both of which would put you into "harm's way."
- **Use a push stick to cut material that is six inches or less in width.** A hand that isn't close to the blade won't get cut. Generally, a six inch minimum distance to the blade is recommended as safe, but some say four inches.
- **Use a stop block when you crosscut short lengths.** Mount a block on the fence – this can be as simple as a clamped on board that stops just before the saw blade, so that cut-off pieces cannot bind between the blade and the fence.
- **Position your body so that it is not in line with the blade.** This keeps sawdust feeding back through the slot of the blade out of your face, and much more important, it keeps you out of the line of most kick-backs.
- **Never reach behind or over the blade unless it has stopped running.** This doesn't mean that you should stop pushing your work before it finishes passing through the blade itself – an invitation to kick back.
- **Make sure that that the blade has stopped before you adjust the table saw. Always make sure that the blade is turning free before you turn the power on.**
- **Keep the table top clean and polished.**
- **Use zero clearance inserts and make sure the throat insert isn't removed.**
- **Do not make free-hand cuts.**
- **Work should be released only when it is pass the blade.** Releasing it early is an invitation for a kickback.
- **The fence and the mitre gauge aren't meant to be used together.** Sometimes you can use them together, but an auxiliary fence needs to be added and should stop just before it reaches the saw blade.
- **Don't mess with the fence adjustment when the saw is running.**

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*Excerpts: [www.woodcraft.com](http://www.woodcraft.com)*

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