

Slip, Trip, and Fall

Safety is a topic most people avoid until someone gets hurt. Growing up in a machine shop with a tool and die maker for a step-father and a precision machinist for a mother, I heard about safety a lot. “put that tool away” and “pick up that extension cord” were frequent commands. I guess that’s why folks don’t like safety officers; they are always telling us to do (or not do) something. So, if there was *one thing* you could do to make Makersmiths safer, would you do it? Just one simple thing? Yes? Great! *Pick up that extension cord!* Really? Yep. Trip, slip, and fall injuries send more than *9 million* people to emergency rooms in the U.S. every year. Add to that the danger of tripping and falling in a machine shop amid unforgiving machines with rotating parts and moving blades and the chance of serious injury goes up significantly.

Other slip, trip, and fall hazards include scrap left on the floor, oil and water spills, and improperly stored jigs and tools. If you make a mess, clean it up. If you spill something, clean it up. If you use a jig or tool, put it away. Proper housekeeping goes a long way in keeping our shops safe.

Machine Guards

Machine guards can be very annoying because they are sometimes in the way of doing what we may want to do. However, we must remember that guards are *in the way* for a reason. If you can’t do what you want because of a guard, then you are likely using the wrong machine for the job or you are using the machine in a way it was not intended to be used. In either case, it’s a safety issue. Guards, which are frequently painted yellow or orange, are routinely installed to prevent your hands, hair, and clothes from getting caught in a machine. Guards can also be installed to keep shavings, chips, or the work itself from striking a worker. The most common guard safety violation is removing guards from grinders and saws to be able to better visualize the work. Although removing guards is never a good idea, if you feel you absolutely have to remove or reposition a guard, you must get the permission of the shop steward and compensate with additional safety equipment such as goggles, gloves, and/or protective clothing. Moreover, once you have completed your work you must properly reinstall the guard and have it safety checked by the shop steward. Guards should never be removed without permission or left off after your work is complete. If you find a machine with a broken or missing guard, do not use the machine, mark it as unsafe, and notify the shop steward.

For other Makersmiths safety information see our wiki at:

<http://wiki.makersmiths.org/display/MAK/Safety+Briefings>

If you want to contribute to a safe environment by helping out, see our safety project list at:

<http://wiki.makersmiths.org/display/MAK/Safety+Projects> or ask a board member what you can do to help.

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