



# Weekly Safety Meeting

*Your Safety Is Our Business®*

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## Nail Gun Safety - Do's and Don'ts

Nail guns are powerful, easy to operate, and boost productivity for nailing tasks. However, they are responsible for an estimated 37,000 emergency room visits each year. Severe nail gun injuries have led to construction worker deaths.

Nail gun injuries are common in residential construction. About two-thirds of these injuries occur in framing and sheathing work. Injuries also often occur in roofing and exterior siding and finishing.

More than half of reported nail gun injuries are to the hand and fingers. One-quarter of these hand injuries involve structural damage to tendons, joints, nerves, and bones. After hands, the most often injured are the leg, knee, thigh, foot, and toes. Less common are injuries to the forearm or wrists, head and neck, and trunk. Serious nail gun injuries to the spinal cord, head, neck, eye, internal organs, and bones have also been reported. Injuries have resulted in paralysis, blindness, brain damage, bone fractures, and death.

Nail guns present a number of hazards and risks. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have provided the latest information on nail gun Do's and Don'ts to prevent nail gun injuries in your construction jobs.

### Follow these "Do's" to Minimize the Risk from Using Nail Guns:

- Make sure that tool manuals for the nailers used on the job are always available on the jobsite.
- Make sure that manufacturers' tool labels and instructions are understood and followed.
- Check tools and power sources before operating to make sure that they are in proper working order.
- Take broken or malfunctioning nail guns out of service immediately.
- Set up operations so that workers are not in the line of fire from nail guns being operated by co-workers.
- Check lumber surfaces before nailing. Look for knots, nails, straps, hangers, etc. that could cause recoil or ricochet.
- Use a hammer or positive placement nailer when nailing metal joinery or irregular lumber.
- For placement work, keep hands at least 12 inches away from the nailing point at all times. Consider using clamps to brace instead of your hands.
- Always shoot nail guns away from your body and away from co-workers.
- Always disconnect the compressed air when:
  - Leaving a nailer unattended;
  - Travelling up and down a ladder or stairs;
  - Passing the nail gun to a co-worker;
  - Clearing jammed nails; or
  - Performing any other maintenance on the nail gun.



- Recognize the dangers of awkward position work and provide extra time and precautions:
  - Use a hammer if you cannot reach the work while holding the nailer with your dominant hand.
  - Use a hammer or reposition for work at face or head height. Recoil is more difficult to control and could be dangerous.
  - Use a hammer or full sequential trigger nailer when working in a tight space. Recoil is more difficult to control and double fires could occur with contact triggers.
  - Take extra care with toe-nailing. Nail guns can slip before or during firing because the gun cannot be held flush against the work piece. Use a nail gun with teeth on the safety contact to bite into the work piece to keep the gun from slipping during the shot. Use the trigger to fire only after the safety contact piece is positioned.
- Recognize the dangers of nail gun work at height and provide extra time and precautions:
  - Set up jobs to minimize the need for nailing at height.
  - Consider using scaffolds instead of ladders.
  - If work must be done on ladders, use full sequential trigger nailers to prevent nail gun injuries which could occur from bumping a leg while climbing up or down a ladder.
  - Position ladders so you don't have to reach too far. Your belt buckle should stay between the side rails when reaching to the side.
- Maintain three points of contact with the ladder at all times to prevent a fall—this means that clamps may need to be used for placement work. Holding a nailer in one hand and the work piece with the other provides only two points of contact (your feet). Reaching and recoil can make you lose your balance and fall. Falls, especially with contact trigger nailers, can result in nail gun injuries.

### Follow these “Don'ts” to Minimize the Risk from Using Nail Guns:

- Never bypass or disable nail gun safety features. This is strictly prohibited.
- Don't tamper with the nail gun. Tampering includes removing the spring from the safety-contact tip and/or tying down, taping, or otherwise securing the trigger so it does not need to be pressed. Tampering increases the chance that the nail gun will fire unintentionally both for the current user and anyone else who may use the nail gun. Nail gun manufacturers strongly recommend against tampering and OSHA requires that tools be maintained in a safe condition. There is NO legitimate reason to modify or disable a nail gun safety device.
- Don't keep your fingers on the trigger when holding or carrying a nail gun. If it seems natural to keep fingers on the trigger, workers should use a full sequential nail gun or set down the nailer until they begin to nail again.
- Never lower the nail gun from above or drag the tool by the hose. If the nail-gun hose gets caught on something, don't pull on the hose. Go find the problem and release the hose.
- Never use the nailer with the non-dominant hand.

**Safety is a frame of mind – So concentrate on it – all the time!**





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