



SPOTLIGHT ON Machine Safety in the Workplace

Machinery is commonplace within factories and industrial environments, but it comes with risks attached. The dangers posed by sharp edges, clamps, presses, hot surfaces and moving parts are clear, and operators must be protected from them.

Aside from training, operational precautions are essential for the safe use of machinery. The first approach should always be to remove hazards by installing physical guarding or protection. Clear warning signs should also be fitted.

The addition of machinery safety systems that use switches, sensors, and opto-electronic protective devices to monitor how the operator is interacting with a machine is a secondary way to mitigate risks when physical guarding is impractical.

The many types of industrial machinery in use perform different functions and appear to have little in common. But while the fine details may differ, the fundamentals of operating safety are much the same.

The following principles apply to lathe machines, grinding machines, presses, machine tools and packaging machines.

Top Tips for Machine Safety

- 1. Read the operating manual of any new machine carefully**, even if you are already familiar with the basics. Always follow the instructions given.
- 2. Always wear machine-appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE).** Closed toe shoes protect your feet from impact and falling items and also reduce the risk of slips. Full wrap goggles shield your eyes from debris that may escape the guarding. Cut resistant gloves can ward off injuries caused by exposure to sharp edges and blades. Read our guide to PPE here.
- 3. Only operate machinery for which you have received full training.**
- 4. Visually assess the machinery and its fixtures and fittings before use**, looking for any potential problems.
- 5. Tie back loose clothing and hair and remove any jewellery** to avoid the risk of entanglement.
- 6. Ensure that there are no slipping or tripping hazards** in the vicinity.
- 7. Ensure you know the location of the emergency stop (e-stop) button** if one is present and make sure you can access it immediately if needed.
- 8. Establish clear lockout procedures and install barriers** as appropriate, enabling the complete cessation of electrical current in emergencies or for maintenance. Presence-detecting light curtains will induce an emergency shutdown if they detect limbs in hazardous areas.
- 9. Make sure appropriate guarding (shielding) is securely installed** to protect operators and critical parts of the machinery itself from flying debris, sparks, moving parts or entanglement hazards. Cabling should also be appropriately guarded. Only use guarding that is free from its own hazards – e.g. sharp edges. Always switch off machinery when stepping away from it.
- 10. Fit easy-to-understand safety warning signs** in visible locations, for the benefit of anybody in the vicinity of the machine.
- 11. Ensure that a well thought-through cleaning and maintenance system is in place** so that workers involved in such tasks are not exposed to unnecessary risks.
- 12. Only fully trained technicians should conduct repairs and modifications.**

Shop our Machine Safety Range

“RS stocks the widest range of machine safety products in the market – From safety relays and light curtains to emergency stops, you can find all the recognised and trusted brands in our range.”

Renato Larosa, National Sales Manager - RS Australia

