

Tailgate/Toolbox Topics



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Division of Occupational Safety and Health
California Department of Industrial Relations

Power Press Safety

Presses are involved in thousands of accidents every year. The accidents tend to result in serious injuries, broken bones and amputations.

Data has shown that in the California fabricated structural metal products industry, presses accounted for more accidents than any other kind of machinery. In one year for all California industries, there were 2,685 power press accidents, including 4 deaths.

Why do these accidents happen?
How can workers and employers prevent them?
Under California law, what safeguards must be taken?

Causes

The main causes of press accidents are lack of training, ineffective guards or lack of guards, and the bypassing of guards.

Untrained operators using complicated and potentially dangerous machinery are a threat to themselves and their co-workers. No one is to operate a power press without training in safe operating techniques.

Guards between the operator and the point of operation must be designed to prevent the operator from reaching under the ram during the downward stroke. If guards are not used, or not working properly, it is only a matter of time before an accident occurs.

Employees contribute to unsafe working conditions if they try to bypass press guards and interlocks, or reach in to clear a part while the press is running.

Preventing Accidents

Close cooperation between machine operators and management, perhaps through a labor/management health and safety committee with authority to inspect the workplace and enforce safe work practices, will help prevent accidents.

Read the instruction manual supplied by the manufacturer to make sure you are operating safely, and maintenance procedures are as safe as possible. A review of the power press instruction manual is an effective part of your shop training program. Ensure all new equipment has proper guarding and/or safety devices before putting it into operation.

Legal Requirements

The regulations for power press safety are in Sections 4189 through 4216 of Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations. Sections [4202](#) and [4203](#) require employers to make sure that operators are trained in safe work practices, and to make periodic and regular inspections of the machines.

The regulations specify the various types of guards and sensing devices that are required on presses. The kinds of guards permitted depends on the operation being performed.

In operations where stock is automatically fed into a progressive die and it is not necessary for the operator to reach under the ram, a fixed barrier guard can be used.

In secondary operations where there is danger of hands or fingers being caught in the press, various types of guards and point-of-operation devices can be used.

Discussion Questions

- ◆ What kinds of guards are used on your machines?
- ◆ Do they comply with Title 8 requirements?
- ◆ Are they recommended by the manufacturer of the press?
- ◆ How effective are they?
- ◆ How could machine guarding be improved in your shop?

Resources:

Title 8, *California Code of Regulations* can be reviewed at:
<http://www.dir.ca.gov/samples/search/query.htm>

California Fabricated Structural Metal Products Industry,
Division of Labor Statistics and Research, 12/1978 —
P.O. Box 420603, San Francisco, CA 94142.

U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/index.html>

Note: The information provided is not meant to be either a substitute for or legal interpretation of the occupational safety and health regulations. Readers are cautioned to refer directly to Title 8 of the *California Code of Regulations* for detailed information regarding the regulation's scope, specifications, and exceptions and for other requirements that may be applicable to their operations.