Explain dangers

Tools that are powered by compressed air are fast, powerful, and ideal for repetitive tasks like nailing.

Nail guns are the most common source of struck-by injuries in Ontario’s homebuilding sector. Over a five-year period, workers being struck by nails, brads, and tacks accounted for close to 500 lost-time injuries (LTIs).

The most common parts of the body affected are the fingers, hands, and eyes. Severe nail gun injuries have resulted in blindness, brain damage, bone fractures, and even death.

Identify controls

• Read all the safety materials and follow the manufacturer’s instructions when using compressor tools. Workers should have some training on the specific tool they will be using.

• Adjust the compressor to the psi recommended by the manufacturer. Never exceed the maximum recommended air pressure.

• Disconnect the air hose before reloading, cleaning, or clearing a jam.

• Choose nail guns that have sequential triggers rather than contact triggers. Contact triggers can accidentally fire if the trigger is pressed and the nose accidentally touches anything. Studies have shown that using sequential triggers can cut injury rates in half without affecting productivity.

• Know where the joists or studs are before nailing through plywood or particle board. Nail guns can fire nails straight through this type of wood.

• Never point a nail gun towards anybody or yourself, even if you think it’s not loaded.

• Wear all required personal protective equipment when using nail guns such as safety glasses that protect against flying particles from both the front and sides.

• Keep your hand away from the spot where you’re nailing.

• Check surfaces before nailing into them. Look for knots, other nails, straps, hangers, or gusset plates that can cause recoil or ricochet.

• Ensure tools are in proper working order. Remove broken or malfunctioning tools from service immediately.

Demonstrate

Demonstrate how to use the specific type of compressor tools you are using on the jobsite. Give workers an opportunity to handle the tools and provide feedback.

Show workers where to find the manufacturer’s instructions.

Discuss awkward working positions such as toe nailing and working overhead.

Encourage workers to report injuries and close calls.