

# Safety and health alert

## 01/04 Employee amputates finger with beam saw

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### Incident

In October 2003 an assembler/trades assistant working in a factory was using a beam saw to trim flush panel doors and amputated four fingers on the right hand.

The worker was clearing an offcut from behind the cutting area of the machine when the right hand made contact with the rotating saw blade.

### Factors

Investigation of the incident revealed that:

1. The injured person entered the cutting area of the machine to remove the offcut.
2. At the time of the accident the finger guards (safety curtain) on the machine remained in the retracted position during the cutting cycle as the air volume on the rams fitted to the finger guards was not sufficient to cause the finger guards to be fully lowered.
3. The risk assessment conducted by the company at the time of commissioning had failed to identify the faults with the guarding devices.
4. The safe operating procedures and training provided to the operators did not identify the safe systems for the removal of waste from the beam saw.

### Recommendations

1. The removal of waste by hand from a beam saw must be prohibited. Offcuts should be removed by mechanical means.
2. A competent person must ensure all guards and safety devices are tested to ensure their efficiency and adequacy. Refer to AS 1473-2001 Wood processing machinery - Safety for guidance.
3. For guidance on the appropriate guarding of beam saws refer to Section 4 of AS 1473.3-2001 titled "Particular Requirements for Horizontal Beam Saws with Power Driven Saw Units".
4. Employers must provide safe systems of work that include procedures for safe removal of waste. AS 1473.1-2001 Appendix E provides "Model Instructions for the Safe Operation of Specific Woodworking Machines".

### Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site

[www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au), or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: [safety@docep.wa.gov.au](mailto:safety@docep.wa.gov.au).

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