

Safety Alert – Drop/Mitre Saw

What is the risk

Powered mitre or drop saws come in a variety of configurations with names that describe the action of the saw such as slide, compound mitre and cross-cut. These saws are portable however in schools they are often setup as a fitted machine built into a bench (see Figure 1) or fitted to a stand with infeed and outfeed supports to handle long lengths of material.

Risk of injury exists when:

- Positioning of fingers/hand close to fast rotating saw blade
- Operating the saw if conditions are moist or wet
- Cutting of small or short items
- Cutting round, cylindrical or irregular shaped material
- Incorrect use of equipment - using for rip cutting

How can risks be managed?

1. The manufacturer's instructions are to be used to review annually and update (as needed) the [safe operating procedure](#) (SOP)
 2. Ensure staff and students are aware of the hazards, risks and safe operation prior to using the saw e.g.:
 - all operators have read and understood the SOP before using the machine
 - induction including demonstration is provided on the safe use of the equipment before it is operated
 - only students with appropriate foundation skills and safety knowledge who are provided with adequate induction and supervision are to use mitre saws as part of their practical curriculum activities
 3. Supervision:
 - is appropriate for the level/experience of the operator.
 - ensure PPE is used and safe practice followed e.g. long hair is restrained
 4. The saw and work area are in safe working condition e.g.:
 - saw blade teeth, guard, clamp and saw mechanism are in place as per manufacturer's instructions and checked regularly for damage and to ensure good working order
 - waste off-cuts and wood-dust is removed to ensure unobstructed work
 - the area around the equipment is free from slip/trip hazards or other clutter
 - the saw is secured to the bench, the material is supported and clamped where needed
 - check the electrical plug and lead are not damaged and are appropriately tested and tagged
 5. Appropriate material is used e.g.:
 - material is of appropriate length and shape to be held securely when cutting
 - defects and obstructions such as nails and screws are identified prior to cutting
 - material is always positioned flat on the table of the saw, held firmly against the rear fence, supported securely and clamped as required
- ❌ Do not cross arms when cutting.
 - ❌ Do not start the saw with the blade touching the material.
 - ❌ **DO NOT use faulty or unsecured equipment – isolate and report this immediately**

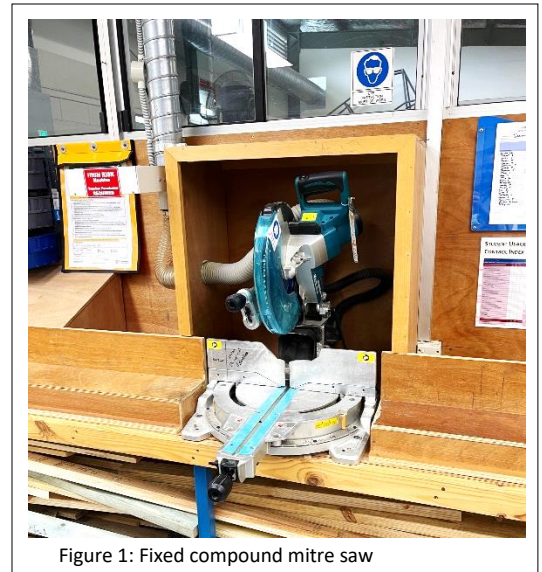


Figure 1: Fixed compound mitre saw