

VWC Table Saw Accident Report to Membership



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TABLE SAW ACCIDENT REPORT TO MEMBERSHIP

Many of you have been asking about the recent table saw accident that occurred at Brownwood (BW) shop. The safety committee investigated the accident and now makes the following report.

The member was trimming approximately 3/16" off the length of a 35" piece of wood that was approximately 3/4" X 3/4" square. He was using a proper push stick in his right hand on the lumber that was between the saw blade and the rip fence. He was using a sacrificial stick in his left hand that was holding the wood to be trimmed against the rip fence. The guard was appropriately removed due the thin strips being cut, and a portion of the saw blade was exposed above the lumber being trimmed. A riving knife was not in place. And the auxiliary fence designed specifically for cutting thin pieces and allowing ample room for the push stick was not used. As the sacrificial stick in his left hand approached the saw blade it contacted the saw blade causing the stick to be ejected from his hand, and causing his fingers to contact the saw blade. His second finger was amputated at the first joint, and his index finger incurred severe lacerations. He is home recovering, doing well, and anticipates eventually returning to the shop.

Several simple errors contributed to this accident. (1) A left handed push stick should not be used. Instead, a feather board is the best method to hold the lumber against the rip fence. (2) Keep your left hand off the table and away from the blade, always. (3) Sometimes the blade guard hinders the cut to be made and must appropriately be removed. In that case, a riving knife should always be used if the guard is removed to make a cut. A riving knife not only keeps lumber from binding after the cut...it also prevents lumber that passes the blade from being caught on the back of the blade and hurled forward towards the

operator. (4) Although not directly contributing to this accident, using the auxiliary fence designed for cutting thin boards is a better choice because it allows more room for the push stick used to push lumber between the blade and rip fence. (5) The recommended height of the saw blade is just high enough so the bottom gullet is just above the top of the lumber being cut. This minimizes exposure to the blade.

This accident is not an isolated one, as we've experienced a few serious injuries over the years of operation. The long time injured member was an experienced woodworker, which points out accidents can happen regardless of one's experience. This accident should serve as a positive learning experience for all of us by understanding that machinery in our shop is dangerous, and severe injury or death can happen to any of us. It is important that each of us does not attempt to use machinery we are not 100% trained to operate, and ask for help if you are not completely sure how to perform an operation. It is always better to be safe than sorry.

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