



SawStop Safety Question

Over the past few years, there have been many members who have replaced older style table saws with new SawStops. The technology of the SawStop is impressive and has helped prevent injuries to users resulting in safer operations.

As the Risk Management Department continues to conduct inspections, we are seeing an increase in SawStop table saws that have had the blade guard and spreader removed. We have also been asked if they still need to be used. Even with the advanced technology and increased safety of this saw, we recommend they remain in place. To make sure that our recommendations are consistent, we consulted with OR-OSHA and reviewed the SawStop website to get their thoughts on this subject so you know where they stand.

ARE SAWSTOPS STILL REQUIRED TO HAVE BLADE GUARDS?

OR-OSHA – “YES. Guards are always required on any table saw to prevent the operator from coming in contact with the blade during operation. Although the SawStop safety system uses digital signal processing technology to stop the spinning saw blade, if contact is made with a body part, this technology is not a substitute for a conventional barrier guard or other acceptable machine guarding methods because it does not prevent the operator from coming in contact with the moving blade during operation, nor does it prevent the operator from having any part of their body in the danger zone during the operating cycle.”

<https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHARules/div2/div2O.pdf>

In fact, if you speak with the makers of SawStop themselves, they also address the issue of using blade guards during use.

Do I need to use a blade guard with a SawStop saw?

Yes. SawStop strongly recommends that you use a blade guard whenever possible.

a) Keep guards in place. Guards must be in working order and be properly mounted. A guard that is loose, damaged, or is not functioning correctly must be repaired or replaced.

b) Always use saw blade guard, riving knife and anti-kickback pawls for every through-cutting operation. For through-cutting operations where the saw blade cuts completely through the thickness of the workpiece, the guard and other safety devices help reduce the risk of injury.

So, to answer the question, **yes**, even if you have a SawStop table saw, you still need to be using the spreader, blade guard and anti-kick back device. Not only is it recommended by SawStop, but OR-OSHA also requires it. By using the SawStop table saw and using the required guards, this will only further help mitigate potential injuries and prevent potential OR-OSHA citations.

If you have any further questions regarding this subject, or if you are interested in learning more about SawStop (www.sawstop.com), please contact the Risk Management Department at **800-285-5461 or** riskmanagement@sdao.com.