

Safety in the use of narrow band saws

Woodworking Sheet No 31

HSE information sheet

Introduction

This information sheet is one of a series produced by HSE's Woodworking National Interest Group. Its purpose is to give practical guidance on safe working practices when using narrow band -saws (blades ≤ 50 mm in width) for curved and irregular work, circular work, bevel, tenon and wedge cutting as well as cutting with and without a fence.

Legal requirements covering the use of these machines are contained in the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992.

Accident history

In a study of 1000 accidents at woodworking machines, 4% occurred on narrow band sawing machines. Most resulted from contact with the moving blade while presenting material to the blade or removing it from the table. Accidents also occurred while setting, cleaning, adjusting and maintaining the machine while the blade was still in motion.

Guarding

The pulleys and the blade, except the part which runs downwards between the top pulley and the machine table, should be enclosed by substantial guards. On machines bearing a 'CE mark', in accordance with the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992, these guards should be interlocked with the machine drive.

An adjustable guard should be provided to cover that portion of the blade between the table and the top pulley enclosure. This guard should be attached to and moved with the top blade guide. It should be capable of being easily adjusted to suit the height of the workpiece and firmly secured in position.

The part of the blade between the underside of the table and the lower guide should be guarded at all angles of table tilt.

Machine setting

For a narrow band saw to cut accurately and efficiently:

- the blade type and width should be suitable for the material being cut;
- the blade teeth sharp and properly set;
- the blade correctly tensioned and tracked; and
- the maximum thickness of blade suitable for the pulley wheel diameter.