

WOODWORKING MACHINERY SAFETY TARGET



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It's time to talk about the 'S' word. Has it lost its impact? Do we use it enough? Do we recognise its true meaning? I am, of course, talking about *Safety*.

In a recent Victorian Workcover 'blitz' on circular saws in truss plants, the basis for the guarding requirements imposed by inspectors was AS1473 - 1991 "Guarding & Safe Use of Wood Working Machinery".

This standard is quite specific in its requirements for the guarding of cross-cutting saws. Unfortunately the angle cutting capabilities of the radial arm saws in truss plants place them outside the definition of cross-cutting saws, as defined, in this standard.

There is no mention of cross-cutting saws having angle cutting capabilities, and the corresponding diagram in the code shows a typical cross-cutting saw fixed at 90 degrees.

Is it fair that the standard has been stretched out to encompass radial arm saws?

In the absence of any closer standard at the time, it would be a brave person who would argue otherwise. But this example highlights the fact that Standards can't always cover all the cases.

So the Workcover inspector came two months ago and gave you the OK, and

now you can relax until the next blitz? Think again. One thing is certain when it comes to plant safety - you are chasing a *moving* target.

And what is this target? Simple - a safe workplace. There is no standard available for this. The current OH&S climate has statutory regulations placing the onus on **you** to conduct self-assessments for your unique factory. And let's face it, who knows the business better than you and your employees?

Tools, like Hazard Identifications and Risk Assessments, help identify issues, and *some* of them will be covered in Standards, but not always. So really, standards become just one of many weapons in your armoury, not a target in themselves.

And did you know that you have a new calibre weapon in your quest for the target?

AS1473 - 1991 "Guarding & Safe Use of Wood Working Machinery" has recently been revised and redesignated into 3 parts, comprising:

- * AS 1473.1 - 2001 Part 1: Primary timber milling machinery;
 - * AS 1473.2 - 2001 Part 2: Finishing machinery - Common requirements;
 - * AS1473.3 - 2002 Part 3: Finishing machinery - Circular sawing machines.
- Part 1 deals with milling machinery



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used for the primary milling of saw logs into green sawn timber products.

AS1473 Part 2 deals with general requirements and principles for all finishing machinery used on sawn, gauged and machined materials, excluding chainsaws, harvesting machinery and portable hand-held tools.

This undoubtedly encompasses

almost every sawing machine used in truss plants, and is essential reading for those holding plant OH&S responsibilities.

As the name suggests, AS1473 Part 3 is specific to circular sawing machines, and should be read in conjunction with the general requirements of Part 2.

So these standards sound like dry reading? Perhaps, but they contain essential OH&S information that will assist you in hitting the target. One item of particular interest is the new braking requirements for all woodworking tools, including circular saws.

The new standard states that any saw with a run down time of more than 10 seconds requires automatic braking, and goes on to specify acceptable braking systems.

I can think of only a few truss plant saws, current or otherwise, which meet this requirement. "Not fair!" you say. "I bought my machine before the standard was released." Yes, you're chasing a *moving* target.

Unfortunately for many machines, complying with the standard is not as easy as replacing the saw motor with a brake motor. For example, serious hazards can be introduced by simply fitting motor brakes to existing machines. Many saws have a reverse thread nut to hold the blade. Stopping the blade quickly could cause the blade nut to release and . . .

Well, I don't like to think about such scenarios, but they highlight the need for considered and informed responses to increasing OH&S in the workplace. AS1473 - 2001 is a great gun in the fight.

Also, if you're busy chasing more than just safety targets, don't forget that you have other weapons besides standards. You have an army of employees, experienced guarding specialists, electricians, and engineers available who can share your burden.

In conclusion, don't forget the true target in the quest for the safety. Apart from the financial benefits of reduced potential for injury in the workplace, you are making your plant a better, safer place for your employees.

If this doesn't feel tangible to you, put yourself in the shoes of one of your sawyers' families. I'm sure they would be glad to know you're on top of OH&S issues. So feel warm and fuzzy - and go get that target!