

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Beginner

Injury Severity Hurt but OK

Description

The fence on my saw was pretty chewed up from lots of different angle cuts. One day I was mitering some oak when one of the tiny offcuts got jammed between the fence and the blade. The saw picked it up and hurled it back at the wall where it bounced and hit me in the cheek, giving me a little shiner.

Advice

watch those offcuts and make sure they can't bind up the blade. Putting a new fence on the saw (a three minute procedure) would have prevented the accident.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Advanced

Injury Severity Close Call

Description

Over the 15 years that I've owned my Radial Arm Saw I've had numerous close calls with it. Two major close calls come to mind. The first happened when we first set it up in my father's basement. We were ripping with it and didn't quite understand the feed direction. There is now a picture hiding an 8" hole in a paneled wall. The second major close call came with using a molding head attachment. Again this occurred in the first weeks with the tool. I figured that Sears was just trying to grab me for the hold-down kit...it wasn't a necessity. I was wrong! A second piece of lumber was launched.

Advice

Follow all of the manufacturer's recommendations for safety concerns and hold-downs. Buy a power tool specific book and read up on what experienced users have to say. If you have a specific question about how to safely perform an operation or even if you should try a particular type of operation with the tool, post a question and seek advice on one of the numerous woodworking forums on the www. Paint a line on the table that your hands shouldn't cross when the blade is turning. Replace the fence often when it starts showing wear. A clean cut in the fence tells you where the cut is going to be. Small cut offs will also get blown across the table. And most importantly, keep your hand on the handle from the time the blade starts spinning until it has completely wound down.

Tool Type

Radial Arm Saw

Experience

Advanced

Injury Severity

Close Call

Description

This accident survey needs a separate category for radial arm saws. There was a time when that was the only power tool I had: no drill press, no table saw, no planer, etc. One can get a radial arm saw to substitute for quite a lot of other things, but watch out! After doing it for years, my basic advice is never rip on a radial arm saw. You can buy hold-downs and Ripstrates and so on, but the fundamental fact is still that the saw blade wants to wiggle a little, jam the work against the fence, and throw it at your head. I built a baby crib on a radial arm saw, and had the saw throw one of the slats over my shoulder and embed it in the ceiling.

Advice

Do not rip on a radial arm saw. Buy a table saw. If you think you can't afford one, check out what the medical attention will cost when your saw rearranges your face.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Close Call

Description

I was vacuuming up dust around the saw when I bumped the ear muff hearing protectors I store on the arm. They in turn bumped the switch on the arm which started the saw. It was sheer luck that nothing was near the blade.

Advice

1. Don't store anything near where it might bump a switch. 2. Protect switches so they can't be turned on accidentally.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Advanced

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

I was ripping red oak 1 1/2" thick, 6" wide by 36" long into 1" wide strips on a radial arm saw. Figuring my hands would be clear of the blade until I was well into the board I normally push the board slowly with my thumb and when I am into the rip about 6" I use a push stick. On this occasion I was into the rip about 2" and still had my thumb on the board when I hit a hidden knot the board kicked back, dislocating my thumb and tearing several ligaments in the process, requiring 6 months of rehab and lost time.

Advice

Look carefully at the piece before you cut. Always use push sticks. Use a radial arm for ripping only as a last resort. Stand to the side of the cut when ripping (table saw Or radial arm)

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Beginner

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

I needed to cut a bunch of short pieces of steel re-inforcing rods. I didn't have a power hack saw so I used my radial arm saw. I replaced the saw blade with a large grind stone from my grinder. The shaft wasn't quite long enough, so I used some wire twisted around the shaft to hold it on. I then used some duct tape to cover up the sharp ends of the twisted wire. I started cutting the re-inforcing rods, and about half way thru the first cut, the grinding stone exploded. A large piece of the grinding stone hit me square in the nose, and a piece of the wire ripped off my left ear lobe.

Advice

Wear a helmet when you work.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Hurt but OK

Description

Kick Back while ripping a short piece of stock.

Advice

When using the radial arm saw for ripping DO NOT try it with short pieces

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Close Call

Description

Saw was set up with molding head in rip orientation. I was using recommended holddowns and a push stick. Midway through the cut the knife got caught in the workpiece, splitting the push stick (thus saving my fingers-hand-arm...) and shooting the workpiece roughly 10 feet through the garage and *into* the wall. This was about 20 years ago.

Advice

Avoid ripping on a RAS, especially with a molding head. If you must, *expect* to get occasional severe kickbacks, so use a push stick and be certain nothing is in the path of the wood.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Close Call

Description

I have a workshop in my 2 car garage and last year I was making a few mirror frame for a customer of mine. I was using hard maple 3/4X3.5X36. i needed to put a decorative moulding on the top of the board, so I decided to use my radial arm saw to make a 3 strip cove cut. So I rotated the saw to the rip position, installed the blade which happened to have 3 cove blades on it. Set the board against the fence and started the saw. now i am very carfull about what i do arround the shop always think twice before I cut, but this I was excited to see how the cut is going to turn out. I gently fed the board into the saw and in a flash the wood shot across the saw table and flew across the shop and hit the wall which was made of drywall. From the force of the saw the board went thru the first sheet of drywall and then the second, then it got stuck half way inside the closet in the house. later I realized that I had rotated the saw in the wrong direction, it pulled the board instead of working against it. lucky my helper was outside, otherwise he would have been standing on the opposite side of the radial arm saw waiting to catch the board. it would have hit him so hard and may have caused a serious injury. I couldn't work for the rest of the day. I have so much more respect to any power tool then I ever did before.

Advice

Read the user's manually, no matter how experienced you are. Before you start a power tool, go through the motion in your mind, imagine how it is all going to work, if doesn't look right, then something is wrong..

Tool Type

Radial Arm Saw

Experience

Beginner

Injury Severity

Needed Medical Attention

Description

I was underaged. That was the first thing that went wrong. I was in charge of cutting scrapped 2x4's into smaller pieces so as to burn them in the woodstove. I was cutting scrap and running it across the table into trash cans for later use. I would cut the wood, lift it upwards, and chuck it in the trash can. I felt the blade coming close to my fingers, however didn't think much of it. I finally got too close to the blade when I brought the freshly cut scrap up to the blade too high. Boy did that hurt. I sliced open my left middle finger and had about a 3/4" cut all the way up my finger and into my ring finger on that hand. I chipped the bone and split the tendon. I had immediate surgery in the emergency room and subsequently went for therapy. NOT FUN! Email me if you want to know more! :) -navets@juno.com
-Stevan Sheets

Advice

Please, please don't be underaged and using machinery. I didn't sue my boss at the time, however he did cover all of the medical expenses. Don't risk it!

Tool Type

Radial Arm Saw

Experience

Intermediate

Injury Severity

Needed Medical Attention

Description

I was a vol. fireman and our EMS unit responded to a call involving a radial arm saw. The operator was cutting a 2 x 4 into small blocks. Evidently accuracy wasn't a concern because he would make a cut, slide the wood over about about a foot and make another cut. He must have got going too fast or lost his concentration because he crossed his left arm in front of the blade and amputated his hand just above the wrist. His arm was reattached but he'll never have full use of his hand.

Advice

Slow down and stay alert with anything you do, especially anything repetitive.

Tool Type

Radial Arm Saw

Experience

Intermediate

Injury Severity

Needed Medical Attention

Description

I was working the night shift and woke up after only 4 hours of sleep. I promptly make a cup of coffee and went out to the garage to continue working on a bookcase that I was making. I had my RAS set up with a dado blade set at 5/8" and just before I sent my large piece through, I thought, I should check the depth of the cut. I grabbed a small piece of solid oak and started to run it through. Before I knew it, my hand was sucked into the blade. I caught the first two fingers on my right hand (strong hand) putting a 5/8" dado into the bone. Since I was cutting a dado and not a through cut, I did not take my fingers off, although I did break several bones in the back of my hand as I hit the top of saw pulling away. Still can't nor will ever be able to be able to straighten my trigger finger, but at least I still have it. Important for someone who makes their living as a police officer.

Advice

Do not attempt to use any power tools when you are tired or unable to concentrate on the project at hand. If I had been alert and awake I would never have done something so stupid.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

I was ripping narrow pieces of material that would become molding, using 3/4 x 6 ripped into 2 inch wide by 6 foot long sections. I had been using a finger board to hold the material tight against the fence and made a number of cuts during the day as the project worked to completion. Late in the day I discovered that I needed one more piece. Rather than setup the finger board again I used my left hand to hold the board against the fence, using my right hand to feed. The blade caught the board and and kicked it back, along with my left hand which was pulled into the blade. It amputated my index finger to the first knuckle and badly mangled my other fingers. Fortunately for me I was in a major city that had a hand surgeon on call at the hospital emergency room I went to. He was able to patch up my hand so that, with the exception of the amputated segment, I ended up with about 85% functionality of the other fingers.

Advice

Don't shortcut the safety steps you need to take. Power tools are absolutley unforgiving of mistakes. Once I was able to go back to woodworking I spent several months buying and fabricating safety jigs for all my power woodworking equipment. With some research on my own I found out that radial arm saws are the single most dangerous tool in the workshop, respect it!

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

I was doing some crosscuts, and on the final one, it was "convenient" to pull the saw with my left hand (I am right handed) and hold the workpiece with my right hand. What I didn't notice (because I was in a hurry) was that there was a small circular wire brush in the chuck on the auxiliary drive. I noticed it when it had made a deep gash in my hand. Much blood flowed. I slapped a paper towel over the wound and had my wife drive me to the Urgent Care emergency room. The doctor cleaned the wound and determined that the tendon had NOT been severed. He sewed me up doubly, with dissolving sutures at the bottom and regular thread at the surface. Fortunately, there is only a small scar, and no pain, close to a year later.

Advice

Any rotary tool in the auxiliary drive should be removed as soon as the operation it's required for is done. More generally, always take a GOOD look at what you are planning to do before switching the saw on.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Close Call

Description

I was crosscutting a 6 foot piece of 1x2 into many shorter pieces. I put a mark on the fence of the RAS where I would slide the piece to, cut, then slide again. The rhythm was supposed to be: 1. Pull the blade forward 2. Push the blade back 3. Move wood to the mark, and repeat. I lost my rhythm and slid the wood over before pushing the blade back and the blade lifted the work and threw it everywhere around the room. I have a 1x2 impression neatly in the center of the right lens of my safety glasses. The piece hit the glasses so hard, it knocked me back about 10 feet, I had a nice red ring around my right eye from the glasses, and it actually compressed the glasses where the lens slightly bruised my eyeball.

Advice

Wear your safety glasses. I wouldn't have my right eye right now if it wasn't for them.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

I was cross-cutting 1" stock for the sidewalls of a birdhouse. All the cuts were coming from the same length of board. I would firmly hold the stock against the fence with my left hand and pull the saw towards me with my right hand. Where I made my mistake was to just pull the cut lengths back onto the cutting surface, slide the board down for the next cut and continue. On my last cut, I pulled the saw towards me and it caught a previously cut length that was sitting there and DROVE it into my left hand. The results of which were a broken thumb, lost thumbnail, and a jagged 1" scar I still have after 10 years.

Advice

DO NOT leave loose material on the cutting surface. Remove each piece of stock from the table after making your cut.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Beginner

Injury Severity Close Call

Description

About 25 years ago I had gotten a RAS and one day decided to try the molding head cutter. I read the book and set it up as close to the book as I could. Well, it wasn't close enough, the wood got pulled in and threw pieces through the sheet rock 10 feet away. The cutters were promptly taken off the saw and given to my brother-in-law for use on his table saw.

Advice

Always read and follow directions. Do not do anything in the shop if you are not feeling well.

Tool Type

Radial Arm Saw

Experience

Advanced

Injury Severity

Needed Medical Attention

Description

The accident occurred when I was doing some production cutting on a twenty inch radial arm saw with a partner. My partner took the last cut on a long board and I stacked it. There was some sawdust on the table so I went to brush it off when my left index finger came in contact with the blade. I spent six hours in the emergency room to find out that there was not enough flesh left to stitch, so they wrapped it and sent me home. Three weeks later, I was back at work and still had my finger. Needless to say, I am more cautious on any machine and thankful I did not lose my finger.

Advice

The only person you should trust when working on or around any machinery is yourself. It is your responsibility to look out for yourself.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Hurt but OK

Description

Trying to rip a short board on the RAS, and the stock twisted as I pushed it thru with a narrow push stick. The blade caught it and threw it back at my hand. My thumb was bruised, not broken and the saw had to be realigned.

Advice

Use the widest possible push stick when ripping, use featherboards, stay out of the path of the stock in case it does kick back, don't rip stock shorter than the width of the blade and use a TS to do your ripping.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Hurt but OK

Description

Was crosscutting thin stock which the blade halfed and jammed into the gap in the fence. snapped back and dislocated finger on left hand which was holding piece.

Advice

gap in fence should be a cut made by the blade, with a width same as blade kerf. Change chewed up fence every now and then.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

This accident happened to my father in 1993. He was cutting some pieces of 2x4 for his remodeling project. The table wasn't properly leveled so the saw was always slowly coming back at him after he was done. He didn't bother fixing this because he was almost done... Anyway, after cutting a 2x4 he turned the power off, turned around to look at his project while holding the piece of wood in his left hand. He then realized the piece needed to be shorter so he just turned again toward the saw but the saw in the meanwhile slowly came back at him. The blade cut off his index and made a nick halfway in his middle finger. He spent 8 hours at the hospital waiting for a surgery with his finger hanging by a little piece of skin. They put it back but his index is now 1" shorter which leaves him with a ridiculously tiny and unusable fragile finger. If he knew he would go through so much pain (3 months of pain killer), he would have asked to have the finger cut clean.

Advice

Obviously, if you're using a radial arm saw, make sure it's perfectly leveled so the saw doesn't go where you don't want it. Before approaching it, make sure you see it so you don't get snapped by the blade. Take the habit of using the brake to stop the blade after you're done if your saw offers this option. Don't remove any protection mechanism meant to protect you.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Hurt but OK

Description

While ripping a short piece of oak, the saw kicked it back with enough force to break the tip of the guard and sprain my thumb. The piece and the broken guard shot over my shoulder and missed me.

Advice

Don't rip short pieces on a RAS

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

My friend was a very good wood carver, I say "was" because of this accident. It was 5 years ago but seems like yesterday. He was cutting some wood on the radial arm saw. He reached across the saw to get the wood, when the saw grabbed his little finger on his right hand and walked across his hand, removing all of his fingers. He had to walk 1/4 mile to another neighbour's to be taken to the hospital. He asked his neighbour's wife to see if he had shut off the saw and to shut off the lights. When she went down to the shop she noticed 1 finger. She packed it in ice and took it to the hospital where the Dr. said "thats nice but where are the other fingers". They could not save his index finger and tried to make the rest work. It looks awful to this day. He tried to do carving again but could never hold the knife properly.

Advice

He had used this saw at least 100 times and got too complacemont with it. Never get used to your tools. They DONOT care what they cut.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Advanced

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

I was installing Brazilian Cherry hardwood flooring in my bedroom and was using my radial arm to cross cut pieces to length. I was nearing the end of a productive afternoon and placed a piece of flooring against the fence and placed my left hand on the board and pulled the saw blade forward. As I started to cut the piece the fence broke (i.e., split) which forced the wood along the fence back and pinched my finger between the table and fence causing a nasty gash under my thumb and breaking several bones. Ended up having stiches in my hand. The bones healed, however, I did lose some dexterity. To this day I have no idea why the fence split. I have had the saw for 20 years and used it for countless projects and have never had an accident. I subsequently paid close attention to shows on the New Yankee workshop and Norm's radial arm. The fence on his radial arm appeared to be lower (i.e., less high) piece of wood that what I have used.

Advice

Fortunately my left hand was not close to the blade in which case the outcome could have been much worse. Since I am not sure why the fence spit my advice would be to use a smaller height piece of wood. I was using a 1 x 3 piece of pine for my fence. Perhaps a 1 x 2 would be a better choice. The instructions that came with the saw say never use hardwood for a fence only softwood. Always practice safety first. I am glad that I kept my left hand far away from the blade and averted a more serious injury. Administrator's note: You can use a plywood or MDF fence to prevent any possibility of the fence splitting. Plywood is much better when using non-carbide tipped blades.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Beginner

Injury Severity Hurt but OK

Description

Was working at a local lumberyard over the summer after my freshman year of college, and was asked to cut 2x4's into 6" blocks for someone- no idea what they were going to use them for. Set up a stop with a piece of scrap wood and a clamp, and went to town. Obviously a tedious job, I must have started to day dream, and next thing i know, there is a big *bang* and my thumb exploded in pain. apparently i hit a knot or a staple from the lumberwrap and it kicked the board back, directly into my left thumb. like an idiot, i did not go to the doctor but judging from the swelling that persisted for a couple months and the large lump on the bone, i'm pretty sure i chipped the bone, if not broke it. real smart, huh?

Advice

Pay attention to your work, no matter how tedious or pointless it may seem. Also inspect where you are making the cut especially on construction lumber which, as I have found from kickback on saws, and jagged cuts from not wearing gloves, can often contain staples from the wraps that are used to protect the lumber from the elements.

Tool Type

Radial Arm Saw

Experience

Beginner

Injury Severity

Close Call

Description

Brand new Dewalt RAS. Decided I would "Square off" a 2 foot scrap of plywood, just for practice. Set saw up to rip so I would be parallel to the fence. But, ignored the "do not feed from this side" and launched that wood like a frisbee. Went across 45 feet of basement, busted a window and actually made it 3 feet out into the yard. Glad no part of my body was in front of it!

Advice

Read the directions and don't ignore the warning stickers!

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Needed Medical Attention

Description

It was Christmas eve and I was hurrying to finish a doll house for my granddaughters. I need to make an angle cut that I felt did not have to be too perfect and so I figure I did not even have to put the reference edge against the fence. I started the radial arm saw and moved it into the stock. I don't know exactly what happened but a piece of wood flew out of the stock and hit the tip of my second figure of the left hand. The cut was bad enough that I had to go to ER for stitches and 4 hours later, 4 a.m., I was home ready for bed. The lesson is simple.

Advice

Never cut any piece of wood unless it is properly braced against the fence of the tool; freehanding something will can result in you being free of your hands or fingers permanently.

Tool Type Radial Arm Saw

Experience Intermediate

Injury Severity Hurt but OK

Description

While cutting 4" PVC into 6" lengths I had arranged a secondary stock fence 3" out from the standard RAS fence and had locked the RAS head in place. With the saw on I veery slowly advanced the PVC to the temporary fence where the saw blade teeth would be just throught the pipe wall. Having successfully completed six of these I was still intimidated by the operation as I slowly rolled the pipe into the blade to advance the cut. The blade bit into the PVC, jumped the pipe over the fence and into the blade guard and immediately shattered sending shrapnel in many directions resulting in 3 very small cuts to my hands and one to my face. Fortunately, I was wearing eye protection.

Advice

This is not what a RAS is designed to do but it would have been safer had I used a negative rake plastic cutting blade and a higher temporary fence, along with adjusting the blade guard to its lowest possible height in the front.