

# DOS & DON'TS: [û] Get Manuals for Machinery and Equipment



The machinery and equipment in your workplace is subject to regulation by your jurisdiction's OHS laws, which may impose [LOTO](#) and [guarding](#) requirements on such equipment. In addition, the OHS laws may specifically require you to comply with any instructions from the manufacturers of this machinery. To do so, you should ensure that you get, consult and keep on hand the operator's manuals, manufacturer's instructions, etc. for all machinery and equipment in your workplace. Failing to even have such information'much less comply with it'can lead to worker injuries and OHS violations.

That's the mistake a lumber mill in Ontario made. A large shard of wood was ejected from a rip saw and into the forearm of a worker, who'd been working about 10 feet in front of the saw's infeed opening. He had to undergo surgery to have the shard removed. As a result, the mill was charged with two OHS violations.

The court convicted the mill. It noted that the operator's manual for the rip saw identified kick-backs as a safety risk associated with the operation of the saw under certain conditions. The manual also identified remedies to address the possible causes of kick-backs. In addition, the manual warned against workers remaining immediately in front of the infeed opening of the machine due to the inherent risk of material being potentially kicked back out of this opening.

So after reading the operator's manual, a reasonable person would've known of the risk of material being kicked back at operators or others and that, to avoid this hazard, no one should stand in front of the infeed opening. Because the operator's manual had identified inherent risks, dangers and hazards'and the safety and precautionary measures that had to be followed and undertaken to prevent the kick-back of materials'then it would be critical to the proper and safe operation of the rip saw to ensure managers, supervisors and workers were familiar with the manual's contents.

But the mill didn't have the operator's manual for this model rip saw, although it did have a manual for an older model. And there was no evidence that the operations manager and person responsible for health and safety at the mill had read the incorrect manual before the incident. Moreover, he couldn't have read the proper manual since the mill didn't have it until *after* this incident. In fact, there was no evidence that any of the workers, supervisors or managers at the mill had ever read or been acquainted with the contents of the operator's manual for the rip saw machines.

To exercise due diligence, the mill should've taken the reasonable step of acquiring knowledge about the measures and requirements to safely operate the rip saw, ensure that the machine's safeguards were working properly and prevent any of the inherent risks outlined by the manufacturer in the manual from occurring, including the risk of material being kicked back by the machine's saw blades. The mill could've acquired such information by simply getting the correct operator's manual for the model of rip saw in use in its facility. But because the mill didn't bother to have and consult the correct manual, it wasn't aware of the warnings, remedies and instructions contained in the manual and thus couldn't follow them.

Even with the best designed machines, incidents can occur and workers can still be injured by the operation of 'these

supposedly foolproof machines' when the manufacturer's instructions for their proper and safe operation aren't followed or complied with, concluded the court [[\*Ontario \(Ministry of Labour\) v. Alpa Lumber Mills\*](#), [2016] ONCJ 675 (CanLII), Oct. 11, 2016].