



Quick Checks for Safe Mechanical Power Press Use

Mechanical power presses are used frequently in many industries. Incidents and injuries can quickly occur if safety is not a high priority. With frequent emphasis on production rates, safety can easily be overlooked. In all areas of our work, safety must be maintained as priority.

When power press operators enter their work area, they must be alert and aware of how to be safe on the job. To do this, operators should be trained in safe operating procedures for the power press they will be using. Operators should be encouraged to complete a short checklist that emphasizes the safe use of mechanical power press controls.

The following is a short list of safety requirements that should be included in a checklist for the average mechanical power press operator. This checklist should then be completed before work begins and referred to throughout the work shift.

When foot-activation controls are used, the following items should be addressed:

- Safeguards should be in place to prevent injury if the foot controls are inadvertently activated.
- Provide seating to supply an ergonomically correct working posture.
- Properly maintain and align presence-sensing devices to effectively guarantee the safeguarding of the working zone.
- Establish and train employees on work rules against riding the foot pedal.
- Ensure that brake monitors are operative.
- Foot controls should be depressed and released before the power press can be cycled again.
- Properly maintain and frequently inspect the mechanical power press for safety hazards and possible malfunctioning safeguards.
- Provide a cover or guard over foot-activation controls to prevent initiation by falling objects.
- Make sure that safe operating procedures and safeguarding devices are readily available for setup and maintenance of the power presses.
- Promote operator awareness concerning what cycling rates are too high and are likely to lead them to inadvertently initiate an unintended press cycle.

When dual palm controls are used the following items should be addressed:

- Provide palm buttons in a location that reduces or does not add operator fatigue.
- Palm buttons should prevent any part of the body from entering the danger zone of the power press during its initiation and should prevent unintended initiation. Arrangement should allow for operation only when both hands of a single operator are applying pressure on the palm buttons, or when both hands of each operator are applying palm-button pressure when multiple-operator situations exist. Note: Palm buttons should be installed to meet the OSHA minimum safe distance requirements.
- Ensure that brake monitors are operative.
- Ensure that palm buttons can be moved or relocated only by safety engineers, setup personnel, or supervisors.
- Monitor power press operators occasionally to ensure that the proper safeguards and safety features are in place and being used.
- Properly maintain and frequently inspect the mechanical power press for safety hazards and possible malfunctioning safeguards.



- Make sure that safe operating procedures and safeguarding devices are readily available for setup and maintenance of the power presses.
- Partial-revolution presses should be equipped with a deactivation system that stops the down-stroke motion of the press when one of the two palm buttons have been released by the operator.

Mechanical power press use can be completed safely and efficiently if company supervisors and employees recognize the potential for hazardous work situations. With well-trained and prepared employees and the proper safeguarding supplies, mechanical power press use can become a safe procedure.

- Robert T. Hart
General Motors NA Car Group
AMPS
Newsletter/Website Coordinator

*Copyright 2002 * National Safety Council * All Rights Reserved. Reviewed 4/05.*