

AIR-POWERED NAIL AND STAPLE GUNS

Air-powered, or pneumatic staple and nail guns are extremely useful tools that allow us to produce faster, with less stress than manually driving nails or staples. They are now common in all types of work, used by workers of all skill levels.

However, these devices are also extremely dangerous. They are called GUNS for good reason. Because they're so common, and so many people use them, some workers treat these GUNS casually, and do not afford them the respect they deserve. Pneumatic nail and staple GUNS cause dozens of DEATHS, as well as hundreds of lost eyes, broken and split bones, and painful, crippling soft tissue injuries every year.

These tools are GUNS in every sense of the word. They use expanding gas (air) to propel a projectile (nail or staple). The only difference is that pneumatic tools use compressed air, instead of burning powder, to produce the high-pressure propellant gas, and because they do not have a barrel, pneumatic tools have a shorter range than firearms. However at short to medium range, they're just as deadly.

So, the first rule to remember about pneumatic nail and staple GUNS is to treat them like the GUNS they are. If you're familiar with firearms, take a minute to think about the basic safety rules for firearms--there's not one of them that does not apply to nail and staple GUNS. Never point the muzzle at anything you do not intend to shoot. Always be in control of the muzzle. Never assume the GUN is not loaded. Never point the GUN at yourself or another person under any circumstance. Always be certain of your backstop. And so on.

Here's a list of additional rules for safe operation of nail and staple GUNS:

1. Always wear impact-resistant eye protection with side shields.
2. Use only clean, dry air to power the gun. Never use oxygen, carbon dioxide, or any other compressed gas.

3. Always point the gun down, away from yourself and others when connecting air to the gun. Have a firm grip on the gun so you can control it. Always expect that the gun will go off unexpectedly when you connect air, be ready for it, and have the gun pointed where it will do no harm.
4. Never use the tool if the safety, trigger, or springs become inoperable. If the gun does not seem to be working normally, or is making unusual noise under use, stop using it, and take it to someone qualified to service the gun.
5. Always thoroughly inspect the tool each day before use. Make sure all screws and caps are securely tightened at all times. Keep the GUN oiled, and clean it daily.
6. Always assume the tool is loaded. Always keep the GUN pointed away from yourself and others.
7. Remove finger from trigger and out of the trigger guard when not actually shooting fasteners. Never carry the GUN with your finger on the trigger; the GUN will fire if the safety is bumped.
8. Fire fasteners into the work surface only; never into the air, and never into materials harder than the normal work surface. Do not drive fasteners on top of other fasteners or at too steep an angle; fasteners can ricochet, or be deflected into you or bystanders. Maintain control of the gun at all times when firing; “machine gunning” results in sloppy work, loss of control, and waste of materials. Adequately fast work can be done without machine gunning.
9. Do not drive fasteners too close to the edge of the work surface.
10. Never use a tool that leaks air or needs any kind of repair.
11. Never work on a GUN with air connected.
12. Never use the GUN for any other than its intended purpose; it is not a hammer.
13. Do not hold hands, feet, or any other body parts too close to work area being shot.

14. Always assume that the staple or nail will penetrate clean through the work surface and hit whatever is on the other side. If there are people on the other side, either they have to move, or you have to work in another area until they're gone. If you and they cannot resolve this, ask your supervisor to do so.

15. Shooting a staple or nail GUN at someone as a joke is not horseplay. It is aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. It's not any funnier than shooting at someone with a firearm. Don't do it.

16. Many accidental discharges occur when workers are tired. When you are tired, be especially careful to follow rules concerning pointing the GUN, and keeping your finger off the trigger until it's time to actually fire the GUN.

17. Although all GUNS may be similar in function, they do vary by manufacturer, and by intended use of the GUN. A roofing stapler is different from a finish brad gun, for example. Assuming one GUN works exactly like the last one you used is the cause of many accidents. If you are moving to another job that utilizes a new type or style of gun, ask your supervisor to demonstrate for you the GUN's proper operation, unjamming procedures, maintenance and inspection procedures, and the GUN's proper use.