

Letters to the Editor

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Faceshields and Lathe Guards

There has been a lot written about faceshields for woodturning safety. I believe that safety message should be reconsidered. Faceshields alone are not intended to protect turners from heavy flying objects coming off the lathe. Faceshields are intended to be the last resort in safety and they provide only limited protection. The use of lathe guards should be considered safety's "best practice."

There is a longstanding and well-recognized hierarchy of hazard control:

1. Elimination (is it really necessary)
2. Substitution (alternate, safer methods)
3. Engineered controls (guards)
4. Administrative controls (education and warnings)
5. Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Far too many woodturners pay attention only to the two lowest levels of safety: training and PPE. Even with PPE, a significant risk for injury exists because the turner and other people in the immediate area are not protected from the potential high impact of a flying object. At best, the turner's PPE may reduce the severity of an injury.

Two other categories—elimination and substitution—should always

be fundamental considerations. In tandem, engineering controls are essential: Control the hazard at its source with lathe guards.

The work environment and the task itself should be designed to eliminate or reduce hazards. OSHA recognizes this fact. On their website, a search for woodworking/lathes/kickbacks states, "Lathes used for turning long pieces of wood stock held only between the two centers shall be equipped with long curved guards extending over the tops of the lathes" [29 CFR 1910.213(o) (4)].

Some manufacturers sell lathes with guards; other manufacturers do not. Printing WARNING in the instructions and using warning labels on the machine are not a substitute for a lathe guard. A lathe without a guard is like a car without seatbelts. Seatbelts save lives; so do lathe guards.

Woodturners, woodturning schools, and woodturning organizations need to consider the use of lathe guards the same way we view seatbelt usage. Protect yourself and others around you by using all five levels of the hazard-control hierarchy, and turn safely.

—Larry Sefton, Tennessee