

Press release



Tips from DEKRA on safely using hedge trimmers and similar tools

Take Care When Using Power Tools!

- ▶ Do not misuse power tools
- ▶ High risk of accidents if equipment is tampered with
- ▶ Store lithium batteries in a fireproof environment

If there's work to be done at home or in the garden, keen DIYers usually don't need asking twice and quickly reach for their cordless screwdriver, hedge trimmer, or cut-off grinder. However, although many people are familiar with how to use power tools, we should not underestimate the risks they pose. "If you're doing DIY, carelessness is a big no-no," warn the DEKRA experts.

This is demonstrated by the many accidents that occur every year when handling power tools. The most common causes include failing to use the equipment properly, tampering with the equipment, contact with water, damaged or worn cables, damaged plugs, a failure to service the equipment, as well as makeshift, improper repairs.

"To ensure it doesn't get to that point, it's important to familiarize yourself with the key safety instructions, which are listed on the opening pages of every instruction manual," says Roland Herrmann, Product Testing Expert for Machines and Power Tools at DEKRA. This is particularly advisable when hiring equipment from hardware stores or buying a power tool.

"People often disregard the manual or throw it away with the outer packaging, but in many cases they underestimate how to use these machines." According to statistics from the German Social Accident Insurance association, most accidents occur when using angle grinders, hand-held drills, screwdrivers, nail guns, circular saws, grinders, and jigsaws. In most cases the accident was caused by the user losing control over the equipment or the object they were working on.

Date Stuttgart, August 7, 2025 / No. 068
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Do not misuse power tools

Misusing a power tool contrary to the manufacturer's instructions is always risky. "A circular saw is neither intended nor suitable for felling a tree – it is generally designed to saw wooden planks or metal parts." If the user does not use the power tool in accordance with its intended purpose, they exempt the manufacturer from liability for injuries or damage.

Notes explaining what to watch out for when using the equipment also play an important role. Some equipment, such as hand-held circular saws or angle grinders, must only be operated together with a protective cover. It is intended to prevent the user from reaching into the equipment or being injured by sparks or splinters.

"People are often injured if they attempt to tamper with the equipment in order to make things easier," says the product expert. One example is someone who used a cable tie to bypass the two-point safety system on the handles of a hedge trimmer, and ended up suffering serious injuries. "If the trimmer is held correctly at both points, these types of situations cannot occur," highlights Herrmann.

Leave repairs to the professionals

The expert also warns against continuing to use a faulty power tool. Damaged insulation, worn cables, or loose sockets can easily cause an electric shock. As a result, it is important to inspect equipment, cables, and plugs at regular intervals and replace them if necessary. Makeshift repairs by laypeople usually entail a high risk of mistakes and accidents. Moreover, performing your own repairs will void the warranty. As such, repair work should be left to the professionals.

A common cause of electrical accidents is contact with water. For mains-powered equipment, there is a high risk of an electric shock in such cases. Many power tools are only approved for use in dry conditions. Using them in damp environments (e.g., in the rain) requires express approval from the manufacturer, such as a corresponding IP code on the equipment together with an explanation in the manual.

Exercise caution in the case of contact with water

Even for cordless equipment, users must exercise caution if it makes contact with water. Although operating voltages of up to 18 volts can only cause weak discharges, "the difficulty lies in the fact that an ingress of water can cause leakage currents which could trigger a major battery fire several hours later," warns Herrmann. For this

reason, it is advisable to always store batteries in a fireproof environment when not in use. Faulty batteries or equipment must always be disposed of in an eco-friendly manner via specialist retailers.

Avoid placing the battery under stress

To ensure a long service life, he recommends not discharging batteries to below 20 percent and not charging them to above 80 percent where possible, as the ranges below and above these thresholds place the battery under stress, which shortens the service life. This approach also means the equipment charges faster as a lithium battery only needs 30 to 40 percent of the time to reach a state of charge of 80 percent; the rest of the time is required for the final stretch to almost 100 percent.

No differences when it comes to safety

When it comes to product safety, there are no differences between equipment intended for domestic use and professional use. "No matter who is using them, power tools must satisfy the same safety requirements, set out in legislation such as the EU's Machinery Directive or Low Voltage Directive. Aspects such as precision, performance, and durability play a role when choosing between a DIY and professional tool – but the basic level of safety does not," explains the DEKRA expert.

10 tips for using power tools safely

- Carefully read the safety instructions in the operating instructions.
- Do not misuse or tamper with power tools.
- Wear personal protective equipment such as gloves, goggles, ear protectors, and cut-resistant clothing.
- Regularly inspect power tools, and have them serviced at regular intervals.
- Do not use damaged equipment. Immediately stop work if you smell burning or there are defects on the cable or plug.
- Have faulty equipment repaired by professionals only.
- Avoid contact with water. If it is raining, only use equipment approved for these conditions (IP code).
- Store batteries in a fireproof environment.
- Keep children away from power tools.
- Avoid working under time pressure.



About DEKRA

For 100 years, DEKRA has been a trusted name in safety. Founded in 1925 with the original goal of improving road safety through vehicle inspections, DEKRA has grown to become the world's largest independent, non-listed expert organization in the field of testing, inspection, and certification. Today, as a global partner, the company supports its customers with comprehensive services and solutions to drive safety and sustainability forward—fully aligned with DEKRA's anniversary motto, "Securing the Future." In 2024, DEKRA generated revenue of 4.3 billion euros. Around 48,000 employees are providing qualified and independent expert services in approximately 60 countries across five continents. DEKRA holds a Platinum rating from EcoVadis, placing it among the top 1% of the world's most sustainable companies.