

# Paper Shredder Safety FactSheet

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Paper shredders help companies maintain confidential records. For employers who are concerned about the maintenance and storage of sensitive documents like payroll records, company trade secrets, and privileged client information, a paper shredder offers the easiest way to destroy a document and any concerns about privacy.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission data indicates a total of approximately 2,000 people were treated in hospitals for business and office machine injuries during 2003. About 30 percent of the total injuries involved lacerations to the fingers from paper shredders. Most of these injuries were due to operator inattention or error.

To prevent injuries from paper shredders, employers should:

- develop, utilize, and enforce a lockout/tagout program to protect employees from potentially hazardous energy;
- develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive safety program that includes, but is not limited to, training in all hazard recognition and abatement; and
- consider redesigning the paper flow in the paper shredder, or procure new/different equipment to alleviate paper jam problems.

## Pre-Use Procedures

Before using a paper shredder, employees should:

- thoroughly review and understand information provided in the paper shredder operator's manual noting the description of safety procedures;
- inspect the paper shredder for damages or disrepair and the electrical cord and plug for defects;
- notify a supervisor and remove the shredder from service by attaching a lockout tag that states "Do Not Use" if the paper shredder fails the pre-use inspection.

The Texas Department of Insurance,  
Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC)  
E-mail [resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us](mailto:resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us)  
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

## Operating Precautions

- Locate the paper shredder and power cord outside of foot traffic areas.
- Locate the paper shredded at least 4 inches from walls or furniture to allow air to freely flow through ventilation slots.
- Always be alert and focus on the shredding task when using a paper shredder.
- Keep jewelry, long hair, neckties, lanyards, etc. away from the paper shredder feed opening.
- Never put fingers or objects other than paper (i.e.: paper clips or staples) into the shredder feed opening.
- Feed paper smoothly into the shredder. Never force paper into a shredder.
- If the shredder motor overheats, turn the shredder off and allow the motor to cool for at least 15 minutes before using again.
- Always disconnect the power source before removing and emptying the waste container or when cleaning the shredder.
- Do not use aerosol cleaners to clean paper shredders. Only use manufacturer's recommended products.

## Jams

If there is a jam in any type of paper shredder, check to make sure that its circuit breaker is working correctly. If the jam is not moving at all, do not try backing it out using the forward and reverse buttons. If the motor is not moving at all, it can burn out relays, switches, or perhaps the motor. Contact a qualified person to make repairs.

## Shredders, children and pets

If a shredder is being used in an office environment where there may be children or animals, the paper shredder should be unplugged when not in use. Small fingers or animal parts can get caught in a shredder.

Remember to practice safety, don't learn it by accident.

This fact sheet was published with information from the University of California and the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC) and is considered factual at the time of publication.

*Safety Violations Hotline*  
**1-800-452-9595**  
[safetyhotline@tdi.state.tx.us](mailto:safetyhotline@tdi.state.tx.us)