

# OHBA Safety Pages: Handheld Auger Safety

A power auger, whether one-man or two-man, may be the fastest route between you and a hole in the ground that needs drilling. But a mistake when using one doesn't auger well for your health.



- **Call before you dig!** Perhaps the biggest blunder is failing to call 811 ahead of time to check for buried utilities. The biggest hazard when using a post hole auger by far is posed by underground power and gas lines.
- **Read the manual.** Not knowing how to quickly turn off the auger can be devastating during an emergency. Familiarize yourself with all controls before starting.
- **Wear appropriate PPE.** Wear eye and hearing protection, gloves and sturdy boots.
- **Choose the correct type.** You'll have to choose between a two- or one-person power auger head, as well as select the correctly sized auger itself. Auger drills are interchangeable and come in 4-, 6-, 8- or 12-in. diameters. Remember, the larger the diameter, the tougher it is to handle the machine. If you're boring more than just a few holes, you're better off with the more powerful two-person machine.
- **Dig a pilot hole** to keep the auger tip from wandering when you start the post hole auger.
- **Watch what you wear.** Loose clothing can get caught in the spinning bit, with potentially deadly consequences. And check to make sure there is no loose material on the ground, such as landscape fabric, that can get tangled in the shaft or can pull you in and tangle you up in the shaft.
- **Counteract the torque.** Operators should brace their left side near the left handles.
- **Use your legs.** You'll be constantly wrestling with this powerful machine while digging. It's a common mistake to overuse back muscles. Lift and absorb shock with your legs.
- **Not too deep.** Be sure not to dig too deep without cleaning the dirt out of the hole. If you go deeper than 12 in. or so, the auger will be extremely heavy to lift out of the hole, or worse, you can corkscrew the auger in so deep that it'll get stuck.
- **Cover your holes.** After the holes are dug, cover them with scraps of plywood to keep workers from falling in and to keep the holes from caving in if it rains.



regulations or standards. The Members remain responsible for their own operations, safety practices and procedures and should consult with legal counsel as they deem appropriate.

The information we provide is not intended to include all possible safety measures and controls. In addition, the safety information we provide does not relieve the Members of its own duties and obligations with regard to safety concerns, nor does Oregon Home Builders Association guarantee to the Members or others that the Member's property, job sites and/or operations are safe, healthful, or in compliance with applicable laws,

## SAFETY PAGE MEETING GUIDE

Topic: Handheld Auger Safety

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Shift: \_\_\_\_\_

Number in crew: \_\_\_\_\_ Number attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Safety or Health issues discussed. Include recent accident investigations and hazards involving tools, equipment, the work environment, work practices and any Safety or Health recommendations:

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Follow up on recommendations from last safety meeting:

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Record of those attending:

| Name: (please print) | Signature: | Company: |
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| 12.                  |            |          |

Supervisor's remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ (Print)      \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)