

Topic: Hand Tool Safety

Quick Tips for the Safe Handling of Hand Tools

Hand tools are devices that are powered manually. These include hammers, axes, chisels, wrenches, screwdrivers, knives, and saws, to name just a few.

Since hand tools can be found in just about any workplace and home, it's easy to forget that they still pose a threat to your safety and require safe handling.

Some of the dangers associated with hand tools include being struck by the tools themselves or by flying fragments of other objects and suffering lacerations, fractures and even amputations. Sparks produced by hand tools have resulted in fires. And improper use of hand tools or over-exertion often results in ergonomic injuries.

How to Reduce Your Risk of Injury

Here are some of the best ways you can minimize your risk of injury when using hand tools.

- Select the right tool for the job. For example, don't use a chisel instead of a screwdriver. The chisel might not fit the groove and slip out, injuring you or someone nearby.
- Select a tool that is properly designed for you and for the job. Poorly designed tools can lead to injuries of the hand, wrist, forearm, shoulder and neck. Choose a tool with a smooth, non-conductive, and slightly compressible grip. Check that the handle size fits you and that the tool's weight is appropriate for the task
- If you are working in an area where there are flammable gases, highly volatile liquids or near other explosive substances, ensure that you are using spark-resistant tools made of non-ferrous materials.
- Inspect each tool for damage before using. A dull saw is even more dangerous than a sharp one.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, such as safety glasses, work gloves and steel-toed boots.
- To protect others, use your tools so that they are directed away from aisle areas and away from co-workers.
- Avoid awkward and repetitive motions. Vary your tasks and take adequate rests to reduce your risk of ergonomic injury.
- Where appropriate, ensure that the materials you are working on are secured with a vise.
- Check your working conditions. Ensure that the floor is clean and dry to reduce the risk of an accidental slip.
- Injuries sometimes occur when a tool slips from a worker's hand or falls from a height. You can reduce the likelihood of these incidents by ensuring that your grip and footing are secure when using hand tools.
- Carry your tools securely in a tool belt or a tool box.
- When moving to an elevated work surface, transport your tools via a hoist or rope.

TOOLBOX TALKS



- Do not create a tripping hazard with your tools. Keep your tools off the floor and especially away from walking paths.
- Maintain your tools. Clean, lubricate, and/or sharpen them according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- If a tool is damaged, clearly label that it is damaged and remove it from service.

Conclusion

It takes just a few minutes to correctly select, use, and maintain hand tools. And those few minutes might prevent an injury that could last you a lifetime.

Quiz:

1. Hand tools are one-size-fits-all.
True or False
2. If you're in a rush and don't have a wrench handy, a pair of pliers are an appropriate and safe alternative.
True or False
3. It's pretty obvious when a hammer has a loose handle, so it doesn't need to be labeled "Damaged. Do not use."
True or False
4. When you need to climb a ladder to an elevated work surface, it's safest to:
 - A. carry your tools in your hands.
 - B. hold your tools in your mouth.
 - C. first toss the tools up to where you'll be working.
 - D. transport your tools up via hoist or rope.
5. To reduce the risk of ergonomic injury, you should:
 - A. vary tasks.
 - B. take adequate rests.
 - C. choose a tool that is designed for the job.
 - D. All of the above
 - E. A and B

Answers:

1 False, 2 False, 3 False, 4 D, 5 D