



Improve Your Home, Don't Compromise Safety

Fresh paint in the living room? A new deck out back? We've all had our share of home projects. Handling improvements yourself not only enhances your home, but also saves money and generates a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Unfortunately, during this process, many do-it-yourselfers expose themselves to unnecessary risk. To avoid damaging mishaps, it's important to properly use home improvement tools and equipment. Help prevent injuries by following some simple safety guidelines:

Ladders

- **Select the right ladder for the job.**

Make sure the ladder doesn't exceed its maximum load rating (including weight of user, tools, materials, and equipment) and is the proper length for the task. Aluminum ladders will conduct electricity. Use a fiberglass (preferred) or wooden ladder in the vicinity of electrical lines. Ensure that the ladder has a seal of approval.

- **Carefully inspect and set up equipment.**

Inspect the ladder and make necessary repairs prior to each use. Never use defective equipment. Straight, single, or extension ladders should be set up 1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet the ladder is raised, a 1:4 ratio. Allow a minimum of 3 feet of the ladder to extend over the roofline or working surface. All appropriate locks should be engaged. Ensure that the ground under the ladder is level and firm. If necessary, levelers can be purchased and attached to ladder legs to create safe and level footing.

- **Climb and descend safely.**

Allow only one person per ladder. Climb and descend facing the ladder, holding with both hands. Keep your body centered between the rails. Carry tools in a tool belt or raise and lower them using a hand line. Don't stand on the top three rungs of a straight, single, or extension ladder. Don't step on the top step or bucket shelf of a stepladder and don't climb or stand on its rear section. Have someone hold the bottom of the ladder for stability if possible.

- **Think before you act.**

Follow instructions from the ladder manufacturer. Use a ladder only for its intended purpose. Never leave a raised ladder unattended and don't place equipment in front of a door that isn't locked, blocked, or guarded. Always wear non-slip shoes, and make sure they're free of grease or mud.

Hand And Power Tools

- **Maintain and use tools properly.**

Keep tools in good condition through regular maintenance. Examine each tool before operating and make required repairs. Don't use if damaged. Use the correct tool for the job. A tool should be used only for the task it was engineered to do. Operate all tools according to manufacturer's instructions.

- **Wear proper attire.**

When using tools, wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including safety goggles, arm protection, hearing protection, and gloves. Require that anyone helping you also follows this



practice. Avoid loose clothing, ties, or jewelry that can become caught in moving parts. If you have long hair, tie it back.

- Use good safety practices.
Disconnect power tools when not in use or when servicing, cleaning, or changing accessories. Use a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) connection or extension cord equipped with a GFCI when working outside or around damp areas with portable electrical hand tools. Always maintain good footing and balance while using tools. Keep the workplace clear of clutter and floors clean and dry. Make sure everyone not involved in the task is kept at a safe distance.

For additional information:

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), <http://www.cpsc.gov>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <http://www.cdc.gov>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration, <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/handpowertools/index.html>

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