



5-minute safety talk

Hand Tool Safety

Good tools are safety devices because they take the place of our hands, do the jobs our hands can't do, and keep our hands from getting hurt. When we say a tool is a safety device we mean a tool that is right for the job, not a substitute or a makeshift.

A makeshift is any tool that is not suited for the job it's being used. For example, using the flat side of an axe to break boulders when a rock hammer isn't handy, or using pliers instead of a wrench to loosen or tighten pipe fittings.

Using the wrong tools for the job is harmful for two reasons. First, it usually doesn't do the job and second, it requires too much uncontrolled extra energy. An improper tool can cause workers to slip or fall, gouge themselves, pinch their hands or suffer other kinds of injuries.

Another danger when using a makeshift tool is the damage inflicted on the tool itself that causes an accident when the tool is used again. Imagine trying to drive spikes with the dented flat side of an axe that was used to break boulders, or trying to dig with a shovel that was used for a pry in place of a bar.

The condition of hand tools is your responsibility and the way you use them is strictly up to you.

There are three simple, easy-to-remember rules for use of hand tools that will make your work easier, quicker, and safer.

1. Keep tools in good condition

Start by keeping your tools in good condition. The old saying, "You can tell a good mechanic by the tools he uses," means good workers take pride in their tools, and they know that to do good work, their tools must be in good condition. If an axe or hammer handle shows the beginning of a split, replace it. Even the

most carefully taped handle is never as strong and balanced as it should be.

Second, store and carry your tools properly. Many companies provide a proper tool box in or near the work area for employees' hand tools. It's up to you to store your hand tools properly. Keep tools clean and dry and in a safe place where they won't be damaged by falling material, run over by equipment, or stepped on by you or one of your coworkers.

2. Return tools to the proper storage place

Do not try to carry tools in your hands while climbing ladders. Carry them over your shoulder in a tool sack so your hands will be free, or hoist them in a sack or other container. Under any circumstances, do not hoist or lower portable electric hand tools by their power cords. If you hoist or lower them by rope, tie the rope around the electric tool, not to the power cord.

Be sure to protect sharp points and the face or side of cutting tools. If you carry sharp tools keep the edges pointed away from your body. Carry sharp tools in such a way that if you fall you're not stabbed or slashed.

3. Use the right tool for the job

Remember that every hand tool is designed to do a particular job and, if it's properly cared for and used, it makes your work easier and safer. If you've ever had to use a dull axe or saw, you know what a difference a good tool makes.

It's common knowledge that you can drive spikes or nails with almost anything — even wrenches or rocks — but it's not very fast and it's very easy to smash a finger or cause an injury. Again, use the proper tool for the job, not substitutes or makeshift.

Injury Facts[®], provided by the National Safety Council, proves that misuse of hand tools causes many accidents and injuries. Here are a few more tips for using hand tools:

- Do not overload a hand by extending the handle.
- When using a wrench, pull it toward you.
- Avoid striking tempered steel tools together.
- When chopping, picking or hammering, be sure to take a proper stance and strike away from your feet and legs.
- When splitting blocks, be sure your hands and fingers are in the clear.

Remember, good workers and good tools go together.

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