

HAND TOOLS

SAFETY TALK

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Hand tools are common and easy to use, but people rarely review how to use them safely. Many accidents and injuries can be avoided by using them correctly and keeping them in good condition. It is a good habit to inspect your tools before and after use, looking for defects that could cause an injury. Defective tools should be repaired or replaced promptly.

CHECKLIST

Hammers

- Is your hammer head appropriate for the surface you are pounding? For a hardened steel surface, use a metal hammer or one with a plastic, wood, or rawhide head.
- Do you wear safety glasses to protect your eyes from flying chips, nail heads, or scale?

Screwdrivers

- Do you use a vise to drive screws into small objects?
- Have you discarded twisted screwdriver tips safely? Twisted tips left lying on the floor could cause falls and injury.

Pliers

- Do you substitute pliers for a wrench or a hammer? Pliers chew up nuts and bolt heads and cannot grip them securely.
- When cutting wires, do you secure the length of the wire in a vise? Remember to hold the open end of the wire with your free hand to prevent the cut-off end from flying.
- If a vise is unavailable, do you kneel on the floor and hold the wire with one foot? This is the correct procedure to cut wire.

Jacks

- Have you checked the capacity plate to determine the lifting power of the jack?
- Do you remove the jack handle after reaching the desired elevation? If not, the handle could be struck, causing the jack to topple from under the load.
- Do you watch for leaks in hydraulic jacks? Oil and grease on the bottom of the jack is particularly hazardous.

Crowbars

- Is your crowbar the right size for prying? Do not try to increase leverage by using a length of pipe or iron bar.

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Files

- Do you use a vise to secure the material being filed?
- Do you have secure footing before applying pressure?
- Do you clean the file with a file card? Steel particles may fly off if you strike it against another piece of metal.
- Is your file equipped with an approved handle?

Hooks and scrapers

- Is the point of the hook kept sharp and protected when it is not in use?
- Are scrapers kept sharp and stored in special racks to protect their edges?

Wrenches

- Does the adjustable jaw face you when you place the wrench on a nut?
- Do you ever use a pipe wrench on nuts? This is not recommended. The corners of the nuts or bolts are likely to break the teeth of the wrench jaws, making it unsafe for future use.
- Is your wrench the right size for the job? The amount of leverage obtained with a wrench is the most it can handle. Never add more leverage with a length of pipe. Get a different wrench.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What other tools should we review?
2. Are broken tools quickly identified and promptly repaired or replaced?
3. What conditions at our work site could cause an accident?
4. Do any of you know of injuries that were caused by the misuse of hand tools?

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