

:: Hand Tool Safety ::

Wrenches, pliers, screwdrivers and other hand tools are often underrated as sources of potential danger. Hand tools may look harmless, but they are the cause of many injuries. In fact, an estimated 8 percent of all workplace, compensable injuries are caused by incidents associated with hand tools. These injuries can be serious, including loss of fingers or eyesight.

Hand tools can cause many types of injuries:

- 1. Cuts, abrasions, amputations and punctures.** If hand tools are designed to cut or move metal and wood, remember what a single slip can do to fragile human flesh.
- 2. Repetitive motion injuries.** Using the same tool in the same way for several hours each day, day after day, can stress human muscles and ligaments. Carpal tunnel syndrome (inflammation of the nerve sheath in the wrist) and injuries to muscles, joints and ligaments are increasingly common if the wrong tool is used, or the right tool is used improperly. Injury from continuous vibration can also cause numbness or poor circulation in hands and arms.
- 3. Eye injuries.** Flying chips of wood or metal are a common hazard; often causing needless and permanent blindness.
- 4. Broken bones and bruises.** Tools can slip, fall from heights or even be thrown by careless employees, causing severe injuries. A screwdriver that falls from a ladder is a lethal weapon.

To avoid such injuries, remember the following safety procedures:

- 1. Use the right tool for the job.** Don't use your wrench as a hammer. Don't use a screwdriver as a chisel, etc.

Go back to the tool cache and get the right tool in the right size for the job.

- 2. Don't use broken or damaged tools, dull cutting tools or screwdrivers with worn tips.**
- 3. Cut in a direction away from your body.**
- 4. Make sure your grip and footing are secure when using tools.**
- 5. Carry tools securely and safely.**
- 6. Keep close track of tools when working at heights.**
A falling tool can kill a coworker.
- 7. Pass a tool to another person by the handle; never toss it to them.**
- 8. Use the right personal protective equipment, or PPE, for the job.** Follow instructions for selecting and using safety eyewear, steel toed shoes, gloves, etc.
- 9. Never carry sharp or pointed tools, such as a screwdriver, in your pocket.**
- 10. Select ergonomic tools for your work task when movements are repetitive and forceful.**
- 11. Be on the lookout for signs of repetitive stress.**
Early detection might prevent a serious injury.
- 12. Always keep your tools in good condition.** A dull blade or blunt point can lead to injury.
- 13. Store tools properly when you stop work.**

Following these precautions can prevent injuries and provide a safer workplace!