

## Hand Tool Safety

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The correct use of tools is the distinguishing mark of a craftsman. The amateur makes simple jobs hazardous by not using the correct tools. They attempt to make a screwdriver do a job that requires a chisel. When this doesn't work, they throw the screwdriver into the corner, and then it not only isn't a chisel, it's not much of a screwdriver either.

It might seem that the average do-it-yourself-er equipped with a hammer, screwdriver, and wrench is pretty well set to take on most projects. But he often isn't even equipped to safely fix a kid's bicycle. There isn't much you can do for a bike with a hammer, and chances are that the screwdriver and wrench would be the wrong size.

Some of the most obvious misuses of tools at home or on the job result from being in a hurry. You grab a file and use it to pry open a box, and sometimes people use anything they can get their hands on for a hammer—including their own hands.

This type of recklessness is one reason why it's a sound practice to inspect tools before using them.

- ⊗ Chisels and punches should be checked for mushroomed or chipped heads and bent or broken points.
- ⊗ Drills, augers, and bits may be incorrectly tempered or dull and otherwise worn.
- ⊗ File handles may be missing or broken and the file tangs bent, broken, or chipped.
- ⊗ The jaws of wrenches often spread from heavy use, and hammer heads become deformed or the handles are cracked.

In one incident, a man struck an object with a hammer, and part of the hammer's handle broke off and hit him in the eye. His eyesight was saved. However, inspection of the hammer before use and safety glasses would have prevented a painful injury.

In another incident, a man broke his hand when he was attempting to adjust a press with pliers, and they slipped. The job called for a wrench, but the pliers were probably closer at hand, so this typical misuse of a tool resulted in a costly injury.

Power tool defects shouldn't be overlooked either. Be on the lookout for such things as broken insulation, loose connections, brushes sparking, and defects in the plugs and switches. Power tools, of course, must be third-wire grounded or double insulated.

All of the defects previously mentioned, and any others you may discover, are cause for taking the tool out of service. Never use a faulty tool. Call it to the attention of your supervisor.

It should be emphasized that the cutting edge of knives, chisels, drills and similar tools should be sharp. This is important to their safe usage.

It is estimated that about eight percent of all compensable injuries among the employed people in the nation result from hand tool mishaps. These injuries include loss of eyes, fractures, punctures, and cuts and bruises.

Proper care of the tools you use is a necessary step in combating these injuries. We've mentioned some of the common defects to watch for, but in addition, correct storage is important. Return tools to their proper places when they aren't in use. Tools left on the floor can cause a serious fall, and tools left on ledges or scaffolds may fall on someone. Sharp tools should be stored so that their cutting edges aren't exposed.

Transportation of tools is another factor in the safety of workers. Don't carry pointed tools in your pocket or throw tools to another employee. Tools should be transported in a tool box or cart or carried in a belt designed for that purpose. If a tool has to be exchanged between employees, it should be passed with the handle toward the receiver. In transporting tools from one level to another, a bucket or bag that will safely handle the tools should be secured to a rope for lifting or lowering. Sometimes you may be involved with a tool that has to be carried on your shoulders. In this case, special attention should be paid to clearances, and care should be taken not to strike other workers.

Safety glasses should be worn when using metal or woodworking tools.



In this short time, we haven't been able to cover every tool specifically. But many of the safety principles mentioned apply to a wide variety of tools. So to sum it up

### **Use Tools Safely and Use Safe Tools!**

**Disclaimer:** Information contained in this handout is considered to be correct. If there are questions, please contact the Arkansas Workers' Compensation Commission/Health and Safety Division.