

# Handle Tools for Your Safety Meeting Kit



## What's At Stake

Many workers routinely use hand tools and don't think of them as dangerous, but accidents continue to occur. Hand tools include hammers, screwdrivers, saws, wrenches, cutters, tape measures, sledgehammers, cat's paws, chisels, punches, pipe wrenches, pliers, and planes, just to name a few. Each tool is designed to do a specific task.

## What's the Danger

**Hand tools can cause many types of injuries:**

- 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.
- Repetitive motion injuries. Using the same tool, in the same way, all day long, 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.
- § Eye injuries. Flying chips of wood or metal are a common hazard, often causing needless and permanent blindness.
- § Broken bones and bruises. Tools can slip, fall from heights, or even be thrown by careless employees, causing severe injuries. A hammer that falls from a ladder is a lethal weapon.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

### GENERAL SAFETY RULES FOR HANDLING TOOLS

1. **Inspect Your Tools before the Job.** Never use a damaged or defective hand tool. Make sure that the tool you are about to use is in good working condition. Practice the habit of inspecting your tools both before and after use. If you are re-sharpening or re-fitting tools, make sure that you follow the manufacturer's instructions.
2. **Choose the Right Tool for the Job.** Make sure you are using the correct tool for the task. Different tools are specifically designated for specific tasks. Replacing one tool for another is dangerous and could lead to accidents.
3. **Always wear the Right PPE.** Personal protective equipment like hard hats, safety goggles, and overalls are a must to protect you while using hand tools. This gear helps you from sustaining injuries in case you lose grip of the tool during

operation.

4. **Don't Modify/Alter your Tools on Your Own.** Removing safety clips or finger guards from hand tools can prove to be disastrous. Don't cover up or paint tools on your own, as this prevents you from noticing cracks and chips in it.
5. **Handle your Tools with Care.** Tools aren't toys. Don't throw or toss it to a co-worker. While passing tools between co-workers, ensure that you let them know that you are passing it.
6. **Transport and Store Tools the Right Way.** When carrying tools up a ladder, don't pass it from one person to another or lift it by hand. Instead, use a bag or bucket to hoist tools from the ground to the workers above. While working at heights, ensure that you don't leave tools lying out in the open. This could present a fatal hazard to the workers below.
7. **Have Space.** When working with hand tools, ensure that you have sufficient room to operate without dashing against other objects, walls or co-workers. Plant your feet on a stable surface, provide yourself with adequate support, while using hand tools.
8. **Clean your Workspace.** Don't leave idle tools lying around the job site. A cluttered and messy workplace is one of the main reasons for tripping, falls and accidentally dropping tools on one's hands and legs.
9. **Get the Right Training.** While hand tools like wrenches, chisels, bench vices, hacksaws, hammers, pricks, pry bars, scrapers, and others seem easy to use, several proper techniques must be followed. Ensure that your employees are provided with the right training to handle these tools.
10. **Buy Quality Tools.** This cannot be stressed enough. Any hand tool you choose should be made of high-quality steel, heat-treated, and properly built.

## **SAFETY RULES FOR SPECIFIC TOOLS**

### **Do's and Don'ts for Handling Hammers**

- Don't use the "cheek" of the hammer to strike nails and other objects. Always use the head.
- Don't strike one hammer against another.
- Use a claw hammer to drive and pull nails.
- Don't use a hammer if your hands are wet, greasy, or oily.

### **Do's and Don'ts for Handling Saws**

- Don't use saws that have a dull blade.
- Keep your fingers away from the blade, while using the saw.
- Never carry a saw by holding the blade. Always use the handle.
- Make sure that you oil the blade after each use.

### **Do's and Don'ts for Using Hand Files**

- Don't use a file as a hammer, chisel, pry bar or hammer.
- When using a file, grasp the handle in one hand and the toe of the file in the other.
- Don't strike a hammer on the file.

## **PPE REMINDER**

Wear personal protective equipment when using certain tools. Wear hearing protection when using power saws, drills, or other noise-generating tools. If a task involves getting close to pointed objects or branches—like when pruning—or if work could possibly generate flying objects or dust, protect your eyes by wearing safety glasses with side shields or safety goggles. When gloves are necessary, make sure they fit properly.

## **FINAL WORD**

As the tool handler, think of your safety first, but also be aware of others around you, so you don't involve them in an accident. If you have any question about the use, condition, or care of a tool, talk to your supervisor.