



Hand Tool Safety

Safety Challenges

Because of the diversity of hand tools and the situations in which they are used, supervisors often fail to train employees on their safety, maintenance and replacement. Unfortunately, this type of neglect will lead to higher accident rates, loss of production, lower quality of production and higher business costs. The essential elements of a good hand tool safety program are:

1. Using the appropriate tool for its intended use
2. Keeping the tool in good working condition
3. Using the tool correctly
4. Storing the tool properly

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Note: The information in this publication is time sensitive. Do not rely upon this document if its publication date is more than three years old. Please check the Employer Guide "Safety" section of our web site at www.saif.com/employer for a more recent, printable copy. You'll also find a variety of other valuable safety information designed to help your business prevent injuries and control costs.

Learn and Teach Safe Tool Methods

In addition to having hand tools in excellent condition and using them for the correct purpose, your employees must also be taught to use them correctly. Be sure they use the proper personal protective equipment for the job and the tools being used. The following list identifies common hand tools used and a brief description on how employees should use them:

Chisels: When chiseling wood or metal, position yourself so the chisel will fly away from the body if it glances the object.

Wrenches: Select a wrench whose opening exactly fits the nut. Do not use a leverage extension on a wrench handle and do not use a wrench as a hammer or crow bar.

Hand Saws: Never place fingers or thumbs close to the blade when starting to cut.

Pliers and Wire Cutters: Show extreme caution when using these tools on or above live circuits as they may cause short circuits, burns and shocks.

Striking Tools: Always use a hammer of suitable size and weight for the job. Make sure the hammer blow strikes squarely with the hammer striking face parallel with the surface being struck. Never strike with the side or cheek of a hammer.

Screwdrivers: Use screwdrivers only for their intended use - driving and withdrawing threaded fasteners. Never use them for scraping, prying, chiseling, or scoring.

Tool Boxes: Tool boxes are meant to hold and store tools. Do not stand on toolboxes or use them as an anvil, saw horse or a place to store food.

Safe Storage and Handling of Hand Tools

Because of multiple work sites and various employees using the same tools, it is important to pay special attention to accountability for tools. When storing or moving tools refer to the following checklist:

Yes	No	Safe Storage and Handling of Tools Checklist
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has the person who is going to be using the tools been authorized to do so and have they checked out the tools?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are sheaths or guards available for sharp-edged or pointed tools such as knives and axes?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is a tool crib or box available when delivering tools to an outside work site?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are tools separated from the passenger compartment when being transported?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are tools checked in and put back in their appropriate place after use? (Some shops have an outline of a tool to easily identify missing items.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are all tools accounted for and checked for defects prior to the end of each work day/ workweek?

Identify and correct these common defects found in hand tools:

Chisels: Mushroomed or chipped heads, chipped or dull edges, over-tempered heads and points, too short for hand safety.

Mallets: Uneven, worn heads, poorly secured handles.

Files: Handles missing, chipped ends, teeth worn smooth or filled.

Hammers: Loose, split or rough handles, chipped or battered heads, poorly secured handles (nails in place of wedge).

Screwdrivers: Split or battered handles, dull or bent blade, bent shank.

Wrenches: Worn or sprung jaws, battered heads, rough, broken or sprung handles, worn mechanism.

Immediately correct the wrong use of tools:

Some improperly used hand tools that resulted in injuries:

- Screwdriver used as a chisel
- Knife used as a screwdriver
- Wrench used as a hammer
- File used as a drift pin to remove the drill from the chuck

Remember to repair or replace any damaged equipment immediately. If you have further questions dealing with hand tool safety, please contact your SAIF representative or the specific tool manufacturer.

Gas Powered Handtools

Never fuel gas-powered handtools in the back of a truck if the truck has a plastic bed liner. The static electricity that can be created by the plastic bed liner has been known to cause explosions during fueling of handtools or metal gas cans.

Place gas powered hand tools or metal gas cans on the ground when fueling.

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