



**HANDLE TOOLS SAFELY**

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, sledge hammers, cat's paws, chisels, punches, pipe wrenches, pliers, and planes, just to name a few. Each tool is designed to do a specific task. The greatest hazards posed by a hand tool are from their misuse or improper maintenance. It's up to you to select the right tool for the job and to use and care for it properly.

Hand tool safety begins by selecting the right tool for the task and using it the way it was designed. Using the wrong tool for a job is likely to result in an accident. Before you start a job, inspect the tool for defects. Check to be sure that the handle fits tightly into the head, especially with a cutting tool such as an axe. Replace cracked, splintered or broken handles and worn jaws on wrenches or pliers. Replace or repair broken tools and/or power cords. Keep tools clean, sharp and in good condition so they'll be ready for use the next time. When you've finished the job, return tools to their proper storage position protected from unintended contact.

If possible, choose tools designed to keep your wrist straight not bent. Pull on wrenches or pliers don't push on them and avoid applying excessive force. When using a cutting tool, hold its handle firmly in the palm of your hand and cut away from your body never towards it. Carry sharp tools away from your body, never in your pocket. Keep pointed or sharp tools away from walkways where they could injure someone passing by.

Tools should never be tossed to another worker, surface or height; they should be handed securely to another worker or placed directly on another surface or level. If working on a ladder or scaffold, tools should be raised or lowered using a bucket and hand line. Never carry tools in a way that may interfere with your using both hands on a ladder or climbing on a structure.

Remember to 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. Gloves that are too loose, tight or bulky could contribute to hand fatigue or injury.

As the tool handler, think of your safety first, but also be aware of others around you when using tool, 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.