

Hand tool safety

Safety challenges

Supervisors often fail to train employees on the safety, maintenance, and replacement of manual hand tools. This leads to higher accident rates, loss of production, lower quality of production, and higher business costs. Four essential elements make up a good hand tool safety program:

- Using a tool for its intended use
- Keeping the tool in good working condition
- Using the tool correctly
- Storing the tool properly

Safe tool methods

In addition to having hand tools in excellent condition and using them for the correct purpose, 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 commonly-used hand tools and a brief description on how employees should use them:

Chisels: Position yourself so the chisel will fly away from the body if it glances an object.

Wrenches: Select a wrench with an opening that exactly fits the nut. Do not use a leverage extension 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: Be very careful when using these tools on or above live circuits as they may cause short circuits, burns, and shocks.

Hammers: Always use a hammer of suitable size and weight for the

job. Make sure the blow strikes squarely with the face parallel to the surface it is striking. 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 them or use them as an anvil, saw horse, or a place to store food.

Safe storage and handling

The same tools are often used at multiple work sites and by various employees. It is important to keep track of all of them. When storing or moving tools, keep the following in mind:



- Is the person who is using the tools authorized to do so and have they checked out the tools?
- Are sheaths or guards available for sharp-edged or pointed tools such as knives and axes?
- Is a tool crib or box available to deliver tools to an outside work site?
- Are tools separated from the passenger compartment when being transported?
- 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.)
- Are all tools accounted for and checked for defects prior to the end of each work day and work week?

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

Examples of 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.

