Hand Tool Safety for Construction

Hand tools are not powered by electricity or other sources. Remember that your company may have its own specific policies regarding hand and power tool safety. Review and follow those policies in addition to the information presented in this course.

Hazards
Common hazards associated with hand tools:

- Cuts, scrapes and punctures
- Injuries from falling objects
- Trips
- Electric shock

Preventing Fall Objects
Guardrail toeboards and screens prevent kicking or dropping tools off elevated work surfaces, such as scaffolding. Secure tools in a tool belt or container or lash them to something to prevent falling.

Working with Sharp Tools
Use sheaths and holsters for carrying sharp tools. When you are using cutting tools, cut in a direction that is away from your body.

Rejecting Defective Tools
Do not use any tools with loose heads or damaged handles that may have splinters, burrs, cracks or splits. Tag any worn, damaged or defective tool and store it in a safe place, marking “out of service” on the tag or container.

Using the Right Tools
Finally, and most important, use the right tool for the job. Don't use a knife as a screwdriver, and don't use a screwdriver as a chisel. Don't use a cheater bar or other device to apply pressure to a tool.

Taking Care of Yourself
Rest fatigued joints and muscles by taking short breaks and stretching. A good practice is to take a 2-minute break every 30 to 45 minutes.

IMPORTANT: If you are unsure of the correct precautions in a certain situation, it is your responsibility to get the information you need. Check with your supervisor or consult a safety regulation handbook for additional guidance.

Striking Tools

- Don’t strike an object with the side of a hammer
- Don’t use a hammer as a wedge or pry bar
- Keep your hands and tool handles free of oil, grease and moisture
- Wear eye and ear protection

Tightening and Loosening Tools

- Fit the screwdriver to the job
- Keep your fingers away from the tip
- Don’t use pliers or a hammer on a screwdriver
- Don’t use wrenches that are bent, cracked or chipped
- Don’t use a cheater bar or pipe to extend a wrench or vise handle
- Don’t use a shim to make a wrench fit
- Don’t use vises with broken jaw inserts, cracks or fractures
- Don’t use a C-clamp to hoist materials
- Don’t use a clamp for permanent fastening
- Pay attention to the hand you are NOT using

Cutting Tools

- Avoid “mushroomed” heads
- Control saws by releasing downward pressure
- Keep blades sharp
- When using an axe, make sure that others are out of work range
- Stay out of the line-of-fire
- Never carry a tool by the blade
- Never point the blade toward yourself or a co-worker
- Pay attention to motion and body position
- Wear cut-resistant gloves

Scissor-type Tools

- Don’t use pliers as a wrench or hammer
- Don’t force pliers by using a hammer or cheater bar on them
- Never use pliers that are cracked, broken or sprung
- Select the appropriate cutter for the job
- Never use cutters around electrical wires unless the wires are de-energized
- Wear safety glasses or goggles for protection from flying bits of snipped materials

Prying Tools

Use a crowbar that contains a grip and a heel. Never use makeshift crowbars.

Digging Tools

- Don’t twist your spine
- Put the most pressure on your legs
- Make sure the shovel and your shoes are not muddy, greasy or slippery
- Call the power company to determine electrical hazards. In the U.S., call 811

Smoothing Tools

Grasp the handle with one hand and the toe with the other hand. Never use a file as a pry bar, chisel, hammer or screwdriver.