

Hand and Portable Power Safety

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Hand-held tools can be divided into two main categories: Hand Tools and Hand-Held Power Tools. Most tools accidents and OSHA citations are due to misuse, poor maintenance, or lack of concentration on the part of the user. In a six-month period, OSHA can issue more than 100,000 citations for failure to comply with tool safety regulations.

Before each use, it is a good practice to inspect and regularly maintain every tool. A tool can become damaged between uses without your knowledge. If any sign of damage is identified, take the tool out of use and physically tag it to let others know that it is unusable. The tool should then be either repaired or replaced.

Tips for Hand Tools:

- Always use the right tool for the job.
- Before starting to use the tool make sure it is in good condition.
- Do not use tools that have mushroomed tops or handles that are cracked or split.
- If you are going to use a cutting tool, be sure it is sharp.
- Use tools that are the right size for the job. Do not, for example, slide a piece of pipe over the end of a wrench to give you more leverage.
- If you are going to use a pipe wrench, make sure the jaws are sharp, so that they won't slip.
- If you are using a tool that creates or could create flying chips, wear proper eye protection.
- When using an impact tool such as a chisel, it is good practice to wear protective gloves.
- Do not leave tools on top of a ladder. They could fall off and hit somebody (including you) when a ladder is being moved.
- Always put tools in a safe place. Don't leave them lying around where they could create a fall or some other hazardous situation.

Tips for Hand-Held Power Tools:

- Do not use an electric tool that has a frayed or damaged cord or plug.
- Unless you are using a double insulated tool, make sure it is grounded even when a ground fault interrupter is being used. Never cut the grounding prong off a plug. If you must use two prong "cheater" adapter, make sure it is properly grounded.
- Never change a blade or a bit while the tool is connected to the power source.
- Always keep your hands and fingers away from the switch until you are going to use the tool.
- Remove the key or wrench from the chuck after changing a bit or blade.
- Always keep guards in place. They are there to protect you.
- Do not carry an electric tool by the cord or disconnect it by pulling on the cord.
- When using an electric tool be sure that you have firm, stable footing.
- Let the tool do the work. Do not apply undue pressure and force it.
- Wear protective clothing as appropriate, particularly eye protection.
- Do not leave the tool connected when not in use.
- Do not leave tools lying around on top of ladders or other elevated places.

Group Discussions:

- Has anyone in the group been injured by a power tool or had a close call? How could this injury have been prevented?
- What tools present the greatest hazard in your work environment? How can you minimize these risks?
- Are there any tools that need to be repaired or discarded? If so, take time to do this immediately after the talk.