

Hand tool safety

Wrenches, hammers, pliers, screwdrivers, and other hand tools are often overlooked as a source of danger. Hand tools may look harmless, but they are the cause of many injuries. In fact, an estimated eight percent of all workplace injuries are caused by incidents associated with hand tools. These injuries can be serious, including loss of fingers or eyesight.



Hand tools can cause many types of injuries:

- **Punctures, cuts, abrasions, and amputations.** If hand tools are designed to cut or move metal and wood, remember what a single slip can do to fragile human flesh.
- **Repetitive motion injuries.** Using the same tool in the same way all day long, day after day, can stress human muscles and ligaments. Carpal tunnel syndrome (inflammation of the nerve sheath in the wrist) and injuries to muscles, joints and ligaments are increasingly common if the wrong tool is used, or the right tool is used improperly. Injury from continuous vibration can also cause numbness or poor circulation in hands and arms.
- **Eye injuries.** Flying chips of wood or metal are a common hazard, often causing permanent blindness.
- **Broken bones and bruises.** Tools can fall from heights if not handled properly or secured in place. A plumber's wrench that falls from a height could cause serious harm.

To avoid such injuries, remember these safety rules:

1. Use the right tool for the job. Don't use your wrench as a hammer or a screwdriver as a chisel! Go back and get the right tool for the job.
2. Don't use broken or damaged tools, dull cutting tools, or screwdrivers with worn tips.
3. Cut in a direction away from your body.
4. Make sure your grip and footing are secure when using large tools.
5. Carry tools securely in a tool belt or box. Don't carry tools up ladders. Use a hoist or rope.
6. Keep close track of tools when working at heights. A falling tool can kill a coworker.
7. Pass a tool to another person by the handle. Never toss it to them.
8. Use the right personal protective equipment (PPE) for the job. Follow company instructions for selecting and using safety eyewear, steel-toed shoes, gloves, hard hats, etc.

9. Never carry sharp or pointed tools such as a screwdriver in your pocket.
10. Select ergonomic tools for your work task when movements are repetitive and forceful.
11. Be on the lookout for signs of repetitive stress. Early detection might prevent a serious injury.
12. Always keep your tools in top condition. A dull blade or blunt point can lead to injury.
13. Store tools properly when you're not using them.

By following these precautions, you can help prevent injuries and provide a better workplace for everyone.