

SAFETY SHORTS

HAND TOOL SAFETY



Common hand tools and powered hand tools are found throughout municipal operations. From the hammer and screwdriver kept in the Town Clerk's drawer to the mechanic's tools at Public Works, all can cause injury if improperly maintained or used. It is the responsibility of the employer to make sure that all hand and power tools, whether furnished by the employer or the employees, are maintained in safe condition.

Some Basic Hand Tool Safety Rules to Remember

- ✓ Choose the right type and size tool for the job. Never use a makeshift tool. Stress and strain on tools and machinery can cause breakage and lead to injury.
 - ✓ Use only tools that are in good condition. Tools with cracked or splintered handles, broken or mushroomed heads, or worn or slipping parts should be removed from use and repaired or replaced.
 - ✓ Keep saw blades, planes, chisels, and other edged tools sharp and store with the cutting edge protected from contact when not in use.
 - ✓ Never apply a wrench to moving machinery. Stop the machine, follow the "Lock-Out" procedure if necessary, then remove all tools before restarting.
 - ✓ Do not hammer on highly tempered tools such as files, drills, or dies. Tempered tools may shatter or break when struck, causing serious injury.
 - ✓ Never remove or alter a guard on any powered hand tool.
 - ✓ Employees using hand and power tools and exposed to the hazard of falling, flying, abrasive and splashing objects or exposed to harmful dusts, fumes, mists, vapors, or gases must be provided with the personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary to protect them from the hazard.
 - ✓ When using saw blades, knives, or other tools, direct the tools away from aisle areas and away from others who are working in close proximity.
 - ✓ After use, clean and return all tools to storage.
 - ✓ Poorly designed hand tools — too heavy, poorly balanced, with a grip that is too large, the wrong shape, or slippery — can lead to injuries of the hand, wrist, forearm, shoulder, and neck.
- Consider the following when making new purchases:
- Power tools with foam or rubberized grips help reduce the transfer of vibration to the hands and arms.
 - A properly designed grip helps to reduce fatigue and pain. Consider whether the job requires a tool with a pistol grip or an in-line grip. When significant power or torque is to be delivered, select tools that allow for a power grip; the hand makes a fist with four fingers on one side and the thumb on the other, similar to holding the pistol grip of a power drill.
 - Tools that can be used in either hand allow workers to alternate hands and can be used properly by left-handed workers.

Note: Also review the Safety Short "PPE - Eye Protection"

Who is in Charge of Your Volunteers?

Volunteers are recognized as a key resource for towns, schools and local government activities. Volunteers dedicate their time and resources in such diverse activities as firefighting, emergency response, parks and recreation, libraries, and much more. No matter what activities your entity may undertake, volunteers are likely to be a critical aspect of the operation's success. Although the benefits of volunteers are clear, the associated risks and liabilities are sometimes overlooked. With the correct procedures and management in place, such exposures can be reduced.

A significant step to managing volunteer liability is the appointment of a Volunteer Coordinator. As in municipalities in which the Fire and Rescue Department maintain a comprehensive Volunteer Program, we recommend a similar program to coordinate functions and responsibilities for non-emergency volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator is designated the responsibility to oversee programs and activities which have volunteer involvement. The position of Volunteer Coordinator is a unique position which can be formed as a full-time, part-time seasonal, and sometimes is a volunteer position as well.

The Volunteer Coordinator responsibilities generally include but are not limited to recruitment, training, orientation, records management, safety assessment, retention, recognition and accident investigation. The Volunteer Coordinator should also ensure the safety and well being of all volunteers. Not only does a safe environment reduce potential exposures, but a safe workplace will create a positive and rewarding event for all. The Volunteer Coordinator should consider:

1. Appropriate application/release of information forms have been completed by all volunteers.
2. Volunteers receive appropriate training in the activities that they are to perform.
3. Accident coverage for volunteers.
4. The age of the volunteer is appropriate for the assigned activity, and that the position is age compliant to certain hazardous activities under state/federal law.
5. Emergency contact information is procured for each volunteer and centrally located for prompt access.
6. The volunteers have received appropriate personal protective equipment and have been trained in its proper application.

Maine Municipal Association members who participate in the Workers Compensation Fund and Property & Casualty Pool are eligible to apply for coverage under Accident Insurance for Volunteers offered through HUB International New England, LLC. This insurance pays up to \$25,000 for medical or surgical treatment, service, or supplies, or up to \$900 for dental treatment, service, or supplies. There is also a small amount of coverage for accidental death or dismemberment. If you are interested in obtaining further information on Accident Insurance for Volunteers, please contact Tracey Herring at HUB International at 1-800-370-0642 or email tracey.herring@hubinternational.com.

The Municipal Risk Manager

The Municipal Risk Manager is published seasonally to inform you of developments in municipal risk management which may be of interest to you in your daily business activities. The information in these articles is general in nature and should not be considered advice for any specific risk management or legal question; you should consult with legal counsel or other qualified professional of your own choice.

Publisher: Kathryn Norton, CIC

Editor: Marcus Ballou

Layout Designer: Jaime G. Clark

P.O. Box 9109, Augusta, ME 04332-9109.

1-800-590-5583 or (207) 626-5583.

ment, service, or supplies, or up to \$900 for dental treatment, service, or supplies. There is also a small amount of coverage for accidental death or dismemberment. If you are interested in obtaining further information on Accident Insurance for Volunteers, please contact Tracey Herring at HUB International at 1-800-370-0642 or email tracey.herring@hubinternational.com.

The implementation of a Volunteer Coordinator can aid your entity by assuring the effective use of volunteer resources while maintaining adherence to policies and procedures. Through diligent planning and understanding, the volunteers and the events that they support can be protected and ensure a rewarding experience for all involved.

☺ *Spring Clean Up* ☺

As the season changes from winter to spring, many of us are attempting to sort through and clean up the clutter that has accumulated over the winter months. Many injuries within the work place as well as at home are caused by the pure fact that the areas are cluttered, poorly organized or just a mess.

There are many important factors that should be considered when organizing the office environment. Considerations such as cleanliness, ergonomics, and maintenance are all critical elements of a proper "housekeeping" plan. A basic Housekeeping Plan should involve all staff and volunteers while attempting to identify and address such hazards as:

- Piles,
- Cleaning Supplies,
- Food Storage and Handling
- Chemical Storage,
- Air Quality Standards,
- Slip, Trip, Fall Hazards
- Sanitation

Paperwork is a material of life with which we have all become all too accustomed, or in some cases being enveloped by. Excessive amounts of paper or other materials can create a harmful environment. Paperwork which is allowed to pile creates such hazards as falling upon or tripping victims, as well as creating a greater risk of fire. It is recommended that any person, who is daring enough to entertain the task of organizing the office filing system, should have at the ready the necessary tools:

1. Careful planning and understanding of the ultimate goal,
2. Be ready for change while being prepared to let go of past procedures and piles,
3. Collect highlighters, paper clips and voluminous folders.

With a little time and careful preparation, your office should be organized, leaving you with a sense of relaxation that will descend over you, till the moment of panic comes when you put your organization to the test. As with the implementation of all risk management techniques, once the program is in place it is now time to monitor and improve.

Rest Rooms should be properly maintained and cleaned daily. Ensure that such necessities such as bath tissue, soap and paper towels are available and in adequate supply.

Cleaning supplies are required to be clearly marked and stored in proper spill proof containers. Proper training in the use of cleaning supplies is critical to avoid chemical exposures through the mixing of agents. It is also recommended that cleaning supplies be stored out of the reach of children and that the phone number of the local poison control office be prominently posted.

Kitchen and food preparation areas can promote health hazards and spread disease. In an attempt to avoid such hazards it is recommended to:

- Provide sufficient trash containers,
- Have all spills on the counters or floors cleaned promptly to avoid injuries sustained from slips and falls on wet surfaces.
- Ensure that refrigerators are cleaned at least once per week,
- Properly wipe down stoves/microwave daily,
- Avoid attracting insects, mice, rats and other pests by properly disposing of trash.

The spring time is a perfect reminder to us all that we should clean our work areas and help prevent accidents and injuries to others as well as ourselves. Through proper planning and the simple application of house cleaning practices, injuries at the work place can be wiped clean.

Ensuring that Playgrounds are a Safe Place for Play

The National Program for Playground Safety has designated the week of April 24-28th as National Playground Safety Week 2006. Playground Safety Week is a time for everyone to focus on playground safety and to advocate safety and injury prevention on our nation's playgrounds. The National Program for Playground Safety has asked all entities to recognize this week as:

- A time to focus on children's outdoor play environments
- A time to pledge to use good judgment when playing
- A time for gratitude for all the adults who work tirelessly on maintaining outdoor playgrounds

According to the National Program for Playground Safety, each year approximately 205,860 preschool and elementary children receive emergency department care for injuries that occur on playground equipment.

- 76% of the injuries happened on public playground equipment
- 23% occurred on home playground equipment
- About 45% of injuries involving public equipment occurred in schools
- About 31% of injuries involving public equipment occurred in public parks
- About 10% of injuries involving public equipment occurred in commercial childcare centers
- About 3% of injuries involving public equipment occurred in home childcare
- About 3% of injuries involving public equipment occurred in apartment complexes
- About 2% of injuries involving public equipment occurred in fast food restaurants
- About 9% of injuries involving public equipment occurred in other locations

Use a simple checklist to help make sure your local community or school playground is a safe place to play.

Public Playground Safety Checklist:

1. Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
2. Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
3. Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
4. Check for dangerous hardware, such as open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
5. Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
6. Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
7. Look out for tripping hazards, such as exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
8. Make sure elevated surfaces, such as platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
9. Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
10. Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they're safe.

Please make a commitment to ensure safer play for all children. The Maine Municipal Association Risk Management Services Department can assist you with your playground safety needs and questions.

Southwest Harbor is a new P&C Member as of 2-3-2006!
 For more information please visit us at: www.memun.org