



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 mechanics 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"