

General Hand Tool Safety

Introduction

Hand tools are used every day on nearly every jobsite. While they may seem simple, improper use can lead to serious injuries. Cuts, bruises, punctures, and eye injuries are common results of misuse. By understanding how to select, use, and maintain hand tools correctly, workers can avoid incidents and keep jobs running smoothly.

Hazards & Controls

Using the wrong tool for the job : Always choose the right tool designed for the task.

Damaged or worn tools : Inspect tools before each use and remove defective ones from service.

Improper technique : Follow manufacturer instructions and training when using tools.

Safety Reminders

Keep tools clean and in good repair.

Never throw tools; always carry and store them properly.

Report and replace damaged tools immediately.

Engagement Questions

What injuries can result from using the wrong tool for the job?

How often should tools be inspected?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: General hand tool operation](#)

[OSHA: Hand and power tools](#)

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Meeting Record & Sign-In

General Hand Tool Safety

Company: _____ Date: _____

Jobsite: _____ Presenter: _____

Time / duration: _____ Crew / shift: _____

Site-specific hazards and controls discussed

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Follow-up action / responsible person / due date

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Hammers

Introduction

Hammers are among the oldest and most frequently used tools in the world. Despite their simplicity, they cause countless injuries from flying nails, missed strikes, and broken handles. Using the right hammer for the material and maintaining control reduces risks.

Hazards & Controls

Striking surfaces with a chipped head : Inspect hammer heads for damage before use.

Flying nails or chips : Always wear safety glasses when hammering.

Loose hammerheads : Remove the hammer from service. Replace or have it repaired only as permitted by the manufacturer; never use a loose head.

Safety Reminders

Choose a hammer of suitable size and weight. Use a secure, comfortable grip and controlled, square blows; maintain clearance from others.

Use the hammer only for its intended purpose. Do not strike one hammer with another or use a claw hammer on hardened striking tools.

Store hammers properly to prevent falling hazards.

Engagement Questions

What type of PPE should be worn when hammering?

Why should you replace a hammer with a loose head?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: Hammers](#)

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Wrenches and Pliers

Introduction

Wrenches and pliers are designed to grip, turn, or hold objects securely. Injuries often occur when workers use the wrong size, apply too much force, or modify the tool. Proper use prevents hand injuries and protects the work surface from damage.

Hazards & Controls

Using the wrong size wrench : Always match the wrench to the fastener size.

Slipping jaws on pliers : Use pliers for gripping, not turning bolts or nuts.

Makeshift extensions : Never add an improvised pipe or extension to increase leverage. Use the correct tool and manufacturer-approved method.

Safety Reminders

Where the task permits, pull in a controlled manner rather than pushing. Position yourself so a slip will not send your hand or body into a hazard.

Keep jaws of adjustable wrenches tight on the fastener.

Replace worn tools that no longer grip securely.

Engagement Questions

Why is it unsafe to use a cheater bar?

What's the proper way to pull on a wrench to avoid injury?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: Wrenches](#)

[CCOHS: Pliers and wire cutters](#)

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Screwdrivers

Introduction

Screwdrivers are often misused as chisels, pry bars, or punches. This misuse leads to broken tips, flying metal fragments, and hand punctures. Always use screwdrivers for their intended purpose and ensure the tip matches the screw head.

Hazards & Controls

Using the wrong size tip : Match the screwdriver to the screw head to prevent slips.

Damaged handles or shafts : Replace worn or cracked screwdrivers immediately.

Excessive force : Stop if the tip slips or the screw will not turn. Reassess the fastener and choose an appropriate method; a power driver is not automatically safer.

Safety Reminders

Keep tips correctly shaped and undamaged. Do not grind or alter a tip unless the manufacturer permits it.

Never carry screwdrivers in your pocket with the tip exposed.

Do not treat a plastic handle as electrical insulation. Electrical work requires qualified personnel, rated tools, and the required de-energization and safe-work procedures.

Engagement Questions

Why is it unsafe to use a screwdriver as a pry bar?

What can happen if you use the wrong size screwdriver on a screw?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: Screwdrivers](#)

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Files and Chisels

Introduction

Files and chisels are effective tools for shaping and finishing materials, but they can be dangerous if misused. A file without a handle or a chisel struck with the wrong hammer can cause severe injuries. Proper use extends tool life and keeps workers safe.

Hazards & Controls

Exposed file tang : Use a properly fitted handle on tang-type hand files to protect against puncture injuries.

Incorrect striking tool : Select the hammer or mallet specified for the chisel type. Wood chisels and metalworking struck tools have different requirements.

Flying chips : Wear safety glasses when chiseling or filing.

Safety Reminders

Keep cutting edges sharp for clean work.

Never strike a file. Remove chisels or other struck tools with mushroomed or damaged heads from service for authorized repair or replacement.

Store files and chisels separately to protect edges.

Engagement Questions

What type of hammer should be used with chisels?

Why must a tang-type hand file have a properly fitted handle?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: Struck tools](#)

[CCOHS: Wood chisels](#)

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Utility Knives and Box Cutters

Introduction

Utility knives and box cutters are simple but dangerous tools, responsible for many hand lacerations each year. Most injuries occur when workers rush, cut toward themselves, or use dull blades. Preventing injuries requires focus and proper cutting techniques.

Hazards & Controls

Cutting toward your body : Always cut away from yourself and others.

Dull or damaged blades : Stop and replace the blade as directed by the manufacturer. Use the safest blade type and minimum exposed length that will do the job.

Unsecured materials : Stabilize the object being cut before starting.

Safety Reminders

Retract blades when not in use.

Dispose of blades in designated sharps containers.

Wear the task-specific hand protection selected by the employer. Cut-resistant does not mean cut-proof; keep the free hand and others clear of the cutting path.

Engagement Questions

Why is a dull blade more dangerous than a sharp one?

How should used blades be disposed of safely?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: Working with sharp blades](#)

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Cutting Tool Awareness

Introduction

Cutting tools such as saws, knives, and snips require special care and respect. Even hand-operated cutting tools can cause deep injuries if not handled properly. Training and awareness are critical for keeping workers safe.

Hazards & Controls

Dull or damaged edges : Inspect before use. Maintain or replace edges according to the manufacturer; never sharpen disposable blades not designed for sharpening.

Loss of control : Secure the work, keep hands clear of the cutting path, and use the correct cutting direction and technique for the tool.

Flying fragments from cutting materials : Always wear eye protection.

Safety Reminders

Never bypass guards or covers on cutting tools.

Store cutting tools separately to protect edges.

Handle sharp tools carefully to avoid accidental cuts.

Engagement Questions

Why are dull cutting tools more dangerous than sharp ones?

What eye, hand, and other protection is required for today's cutting task?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: Snips](#)

[OSHA: Hand and power tools](#)

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Pinch and Crush Hazards

Introduction

Many hand tool tasks involve risks of pinching or crushing fingers. These injuries are painful and can be long-lasting. Awareness and safe work practices reduce the risk of getting caught in moving or closing parts.

Hazards & Controls

Pinching fingers between jaws of tools : Keep hands clear of moving parts.

Heavy tools or materials : Use suitable handling aids, secure supports, and a planned landing area. Do not place fingers beneath a load.

Unstable workpieces : Secure work before applying force.

Safety Reminders

Use task-appropriate gloves where specified, but never rely on gloves to prevent crushing. Keep hands out of closing gaps, under suspended loads, and away from moving machinery.

Communicate clearly with coworkers during team lifts.

Inspect grips and handles for secure attachment.

Engagement Questions

What are examples of pinch hazards with pliers?

How can unstable workpieces create crush hazards?

Sources and use notice

[OSHA: Machine guarding requirements](#)

[OSHA: Hand protection](#)

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Storing Tools Safely

Introduction

Safe storage of tools prevents injuries, protects the tools, and ensures they are available when needed. Tools left on ladders, scaffolds, or walkways can easily become falling or tripping hazards.

Hazards & Controls

Dropped tools : Use secured storage and the site's dropped-object controls. Where tethering is required, use a compatible rated system; an ordinary tool belt is not a tether.

Cluttered storage areas : Keep storage organized to avoid trips and falls.

Sharp tools : Cover cutting edges and tips and use designated holders or cases. Position tools so no one must reach across an exposed edge.

Safety Reminders

Never leave tools loose on ladders, scaffold edges, or overhead work areas. Secure tools when required for work at height and remove them when finished.

Use designated tool storage containers.

Return tools after use to avoid loss or damage.

Engagement Questions

What injuries can occur from tools falling from height?

Where should sharp tools be stored when not in use?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: Workplace housekeeping](#)

[OSHA: Walking-working surfaces](#)

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Tool Maintenance and Inspection

Introduction

Proper maintenance and inspection ensure tools remain safe and reliable. A poorly maintained hand tool can fail at the worst possible time, leading to injuries or delays. Regular care extends tool life and builds worker confidence.

Hazards & Controls

Loose parts or cracks : Inspect before each use and at the intervals required by the manufacturer and site program. Tag and remove damaged tools from service.

Rust and corrosion : Clean and protect tools as the manufacturer directs. Keep gripping and striking surfaces free of oil that could cause slipping.

Improper sharpening : Follow correct procedures to maintain cutting tools safely.

Safety Reminders

Document inspections when required.

Return tools to storage in clean condition.

Only trained, authorized persons should perform permitted repairs using correct parts and procedures. Replace tools that cannot be restored safely.

Engagement Questions

What is the risk of using a corroded tool?

How often should hand tools be inspected?

Sources and use notice

[CCOHS: Hand tool design and condition](#)

[OSHA: Hand and portable tool condition](#)

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