

Hand Safety - Avoiding Hand Tool Injuries

Hand tools have been used for a long time. Since tools have been essential to our survival, they have been the cause of lots of pain and injuries. They are typically responsible for about 7 to 10% of all work injuries. The average cost of a hand tool injury is more than \$1000 – counting compensation costs alone.

The cause of hand tool injuries can often be traced to improper use of a hand tool, be it a power tool or a hammer. Here are some ways to avoid hand tool injuries:

- Use the right tool for the job. Some examples of misuse of tools are using a wrench as a hammer, pliers as a wrench, and a claw hammer as a ball peen hammer.
- Keep tools in good condition. Broken or working tools (wrenches with cracked or worn jaws, electric tools with broken plugs etc.) should be repaired or discarded.
- Use tools in the way they were intended to be used (e.g. instruct users to cut away from the body when using knives, ground all electric tools etc.)
- Use the instruction manual. Review the instruction manual, which came with the tool and use it to train employees. While many hand tools may not have such instructions, virtually all power tools will.
- Keep the original manuals in a safe place, and use photocopies of the manuals for training and reference.
- Keep tools in a safe place. Many accidents have been caused by tools falling from overhead and by sharp tools carried in pockets or left in toolboxes with the cutting edges exposed.
- Unplug (or remove the battery) all tools whenever you change saw blades, drill bits, or otherwise service power tools.
- Wear proper personal protection. In virtually all cases, this will require at a minimum that you wear OSHA/ANSI approved eye protection.