

Toolbox Safety Tips

Taken from: Family Safety & Health, Spring 2001

Tools can be dangerous. In 1998, there were about 98,700 injuries from saws; 42,400 injuries from hammers; 17,800 injuries from grinders, buffers and polishers; and 17,200 injuries from drills. While many “do-it-yourselfers” enjoy working with tools, doing it safely is another matter. Here are some tips for those who do it themselves:

- **Plan Ahead:** Visualize the project and think of everything that might be dangerous. Ask yourself first: “How can this thing hurt me?” Make a practice cut with the saw before you plug in the electricity.
- **Prepare Your Workspace:** Working in a clutter and debris free environment can prevent accidents, particularly with trip and fall hazards. Make sure there is adequate lighting before you start working. If working with solvents, paints, or chemicals, ensure there is good ventilation before you start.
- **Dress for Success:** Dressing the part can decrease the risk and severity of an injury. Your safety gear should include safety glasses, earplugs, respirators, gloves and shoes. Avoid loose clothing and remove all jewelry before using any tools. Long sleeves and long hair should be secured from any moving machinery.
- **Read Labels:** Always read any instructions before you begin working. Pay close attention to safety instructions and warning labels. When in doubt, consult the Manufacturers Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for any chemicals you may be using.
- **Use The Right Tool For The Job:** Ask for instruction from the retail store when you purchase any tools. Use tools properly – don’t use a drill as a cutting tool, for example.
- **Keep Tools Cleaned and Stored Properly:** Tools are safest when they are well cared for. Keep all cutting tools sharpened (dull tools are far more dangerous than sharp ones). Keep all tools cleaned and lubricated when not in use. Keep all tools under lock and key and away from children.
- **Be Smart With Electricity:** Use an electrical tester to ensure that the power is turned off. If in doubt, flip the circuit breaker or remove the fuses. Make sure all power tools have insulated motors and a 3-pronged (grounded) electrical wire. Plug power tools into ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFI). Don’t work with power tools in any wet environment.
- **Know What You Are Doing – Or Don’t Do It:** If in doubt, ask for professional assistance. Getting hurt is not worth any project, regardless of the savings.
- **Don’t Try Everything At Once:** There is one sure way to injure yourself – by overdoing it. Pace the job and take adequate breaks to prevent injury. Be alert while working on the project. Make sure children, pets, and other distractions are removed from the jobsite.