

Toolbox Talk

Hand Tool Safety

A “junk drawer” in an apartment or a professional auto shop, Hand Tools are everywhere and for everyone. Come to think of it my son got his first tool kit at 3 years old (two screw drivers, a mini hammer, and a tape measure to be exact).

Misuse and Improper Maintenance

The greatest hazards from these small, powerless tools, is operator error. Think about how many times you grab the closest hard object to use as a hammer. Here are the most common missuses:

- Always use the correct tool for the job.
 - An adjustable wrench is not a hammer
 - Screwdrivers are NOT chisels
- Dull tools are more dangerous than sharp tools. The amount of extra force on a utility knife reduces its accuracy and increases the chances of cutting the user.
 - Keep chisels sharp
 - Replace or sharpen dull knives and saws
 - Keep sharp blades sheathed or safely stored when not in use
- Maintain handles and grips
 - Never use files, chisels, or screwdrivers with missing or damaged handles
 - Wooden handles should be kept free from splinters and cracks
 - Hammers, axes, hatchets, demo tools with wooden handles should be secured with a tapered wedge
 - Tape is not considered a repair to a cracked handle, the best option is to replace the handle
- Do NOT hit a hammer with another hammer. The two hardened metal faces can violently shatter when hit against each other.
 - Some metal tools are meant to be hit, like wood splitters, nail pulls, and flat bars. Always wear [safety glasses](#) when doing this as they too could shatter
 - Gloves are also helpful when using striking tools to minimize the vibrations and blisters
- Replace wrenches and sockets if they become worn out, slipping off a stuck bolt can cause painful hand injuries.
- Replace tape measures if they become cracked or develop sharp burrs along the edges

Best Practices

- Keep tools clean. Dirty/greasy/rusty tools are harder to use and inspect properly.
- Do not cover tools with tape or paint.
- Store tools properly. Leaving tools exposed to the elements shortens their lifespan. Extreme temps and UV exposure makes them brittle.
- Use the tools how they are designed to be used.

Questions for you

1. Are there any tools you have in the toolbox that should be replaced? (A screwdriver with a broken tip, hammer missing a claw, stripped out socket?)
2. What tool are you regularly using incorrectly? (Hammer on hammer, screwdriver chisel, utility knife as a flat screwdriver?)