Hand Tool Safety

Hand TOOLS are some of the most commonly used tools on the job. According to the Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, the definition of a hand tool is any hand-held equipment that is powered by the energy of a worker. This means that they are powered through manual labour and human force rather than by electricity. Some examples include hammers, chisels, screw drivers, saws and pliers amongst others.

Generally, the use of hand tools is considered less dangerous than the use of power tools; however, like any tool, hand tools can still pose as a source for potential danger. Hand tools can cause some serious injuries if they are not used with consideration. A combination of proper safe work procedures and selection of correct personal protective equipment is the accepted practice. To avoid injuries, always make sure to use the right tool in the right size for the intended use/job.

Sometimes hand tools can easily become worn out—be sure to avoid complacency when it comes to simple inspection. Like all other tools and materials on the job, it is important to note any defects found before starting a job. Look for defects such as broken or damaged tools, tools that are dull and/or overused.

Tips for Using Hand Tools Safely:

■ Consider using a tool belt for carrying or using a hoist/rope to transport tools up a ladder or scaffolding. Never carry tools in hand when climbing up ladders.

■ If passing tools to a co-worker, do so by using the handle. Never toss or throw a hand tool to another person.

■ Always cut in a direction away from the body to avoid abrasions, cuts, or punctures.

■ It is good practice to keep track of all tools and maintain an organized and clean worksite at all times.

■ When finished using tools for the day, simply inspect all hand tools before putting them away. Detection of repetitive stress and damage to the tools can help prevent a serious injury.

■ It is good practice to maintain and store tools properly.

■ It is very important that all tools be kept clean and sharp in order to avoid injury. A dull knife requires excessive force to make the required cut, creating a greater chance for injury.

Using these safety precautions can help prevent injuries and provide a great example of proper hand tool use, care, and storage in the workplace.
When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite, we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names, and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose: to inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up-to-date on the information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance, and any follow-up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping, but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.

One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager’s responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks. Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf

ABOUT THE SASKATCHEWAN CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ASSOCIATION

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded, membership-based, non-profit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees in the construction industry throughout the province to reduce the human and financial losses associated with injuries. Registered March 20, 1995, the SCSA is, and has been since inception, committed to injury prevention. Serving almost 10,000 member companies with business offices in both Regina and Saskatoon, the major business units of the association are Advisory Services, Business Development, Corporate Services, Program Services and Training. The mission of the SCSA is constructing safety leadership in Saskatchewan and the vision is to create the safest construction environment in Canada.

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