

Toolbox Talks 2

089: Unsafe Conditions: Hand Tools

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review company safety policies related to hand tools.

What this Safety Talk covers:

This Safety Talk addresses unsafe conditions related to hand tools.

Discussion notes:

Unsafe conditions involving hand tools

- Carrying means not appropriate. The traditional leather tool pouch has survived for decades for a reason. It securely holds the tools needed for the typical work being done. Make sure you carry your tools in a way that prevents dropping but also allows ready access when you need a particular tool.
- Lifting means not appropriate. Your tool pouch securely holds your tools when you wear it. But hoisting it up to an elevation with a rope can cause it to tip and dump the tools on people below. Place the pouch of tools in a bucket and raise the bucket.
- Tools aren't clean. Most people in the construction trades are fastidious about their tools. Some are not. If you're in that second group, you have a safety problem. Clean your tools before putting them away. Some contaminants will attack and erode the finish. Others just make tools slippery. Wiping off grease takes only a second.
- Tools not appropriate for the work. If, for example, you have metric fasteners and only SAE tools, you are going to slip. In addition to skinning your knuckles and possibly getting electrocuted, you're going to damage the fastener for the next person.
- Tools are consumer-grade. Don't use cheap tools. The industrial-grade or professional level tools are more precise, last longer, produce less strain on the joints, are less likely to chip, and have less slippage hazard. They also have superior finishes, last longer, and cost less in the long run.
- Tools are excessively worn. Any tool with too much wear is unsafe. Replace it. How much wear is too much? Look for chips, peeling, and rounded edges.
- Damaged insulation on insulated tools. The real danger here is you'll actually use the tool and it won't quite protect you. If the insulation isn't completely good, replace the tool or have it reinsulated. Wrapping it in PVC tape is not a suitable means of insulating. Inspect insulated tools carefully before starting the job. Look for cracks, divots, and other imperfections.
- Lending. It's customary in construction to be a "good guy" and let someone who needs a wrench or screwdriver borrow yours. This practice builds trust and helps move the work along. Rarely will anyone steal or abuse a borrowed tool. But don't assume. When a tool comes back, check it to ensure it hasn't been damaged. This is especially true of insulated tools.

Review and discussion

1. How do you normally carry your tools? Are you sure this method is safe and secure?
2. If another person is working above you without a secure means of carrying tools, what should you do?
3. What's the proper way to hoist a tool pouch to an elevation such as scaffolding?

10. Lending and borrowing tools is a long tradition on construction sites. Most people will borrow a tool only when in a pinch, and almost nobody will abuse the privilege by borrowing routinely. Most people will loan a tool, under the assumption that the other person really needs it and will return the tool shortly. What's something you cannot, for safety reasons, assume about tools you loan out?

Participant's Signature and Date

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