



You are the Sharpest Tool in the Box

Take a moment to think about the tools in your tool belt, your tool bag, or your site's tool room. Are there any sharp tools in there? Of course. The nature of your work requires that you handle, carry, and use sharp tools every day. They may be part of your everyday activities, but you shouldn't ever disregard the dangers and hazards of the tools of your trade.

Many hand tools used at work sites are sharp. Screwdrivers, handsaws, pickaxes, hand punches, spud wrenches, box-cutters, and razor blades are just a few. Power tools that have sharp edges or points include chainsaws, drills, circular saws, edgers, nail guns, pavement breakers, and pole saws.

One of the best ways to prevent injuries caused by sharp tools is by learning to use the tool properly. Nobody can be an expert at using every tool made today. If you don't know how to use a tool, don't be afraid to ask someone who does. And if you see a co-worker using a tool incorrectly, stop him and show him how to use it correctly before someone gets hurt.

When selecting a sharp tool to use, make sure you choose the right tool for the job. Never "make do" because you're too busy—or lazy—to get the proper tool. Keep your work area and storage areas neat and orderly so you can find the tool you need when you need it.

When using a cutting tool, always cut away from yourself. Wear eye protection if there's a chance that you'll create sparks or flying fragments. Wear gloves to add a layer of protection to your hands. Never use excessive pressure or force on any tool.

Be mindful when carrying or handling sharp tools. If you carry tools in your hands, keep sharp or cutting edges covered and hold them away from you. Carrying tools in your pockets is dangerous, especially if the tools are sharp or pointed. If you fall or just squat down, you might find that tool stuck in your side, leg, or back. Instead, carry tools in a tool kit, toolbox, or tool belt.

At the beginning of this safety meeting, we said that you are the sharpest tool in the box. You could be the most dangerous if you don't handle tools correctly. Anytime you carry, handle, or use a sharp tool you should work safely and cautiously to prevent injuries. Never engage in horseplay or jokes in any way when holding a tool. One slip of the hand could make your co-worker lose an eye or finger or suffer a deadly injury. If your buddy wants to borrow one of your tools, hand it to him. Don't throw it. The human body was not meant to endure the sharp and pointy edges of tools.



SAFETY REMINDER

Never deactivate or wedge back a tool guard. Guards are in place to protect your safety and your life.

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