

# Hand Tool Hazards



## WHAT'S AT STAKE

We all know how important it is to use caution around power tools. But what about tools in general? Can a wrench really be dangerous? The reality is that tools powered by a worker's strength alone cause serious injuries each year.

## WHAT'S THE DANGER

Used carelessly, a hand tool can cause fractures, bruises, scrapes, punctures, cuts and worse. Workers are at greatest risk when misusing a hand tool or when using a tool that has been poorly maintained.

### EXAMPLE

A worker using a hammer and chisel without eye protection found out just how dangerous basic tools can be. The worker was left partially blind after a fragment flew into his eyes. In another instance, a worker not wearing gloves nearly cut off his thumb while using a knife to open a cardboard carton. The lesson to take away is this: Never improvise and always wear your PPE (personal protective equipment).

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Choose the right tool for the job. A wrench isn't a sledge hammer, a knife isn't a can opener and a screwdriver isn't a crowbar.
- Examine your tools regularly to ensure they are clean and defect-free. Throw out or repair any tool with a split handle, worn jaws, dull blades, dull cutting teeth or a mushroomed striking head.
- Use insulated tools when working with or near electricity. But don't rely on the insulation alone; take all other precautions to prevent electrical shock.
- Tools used in potentially flammable or explosive environments should be of the non-sparking type. Do not rely on the non-sparking features alone. Take all other precautions to prevent explosions and fires.
- Wear the required PPE (personal protective equipment) such as safety goggles, gloves and boots.
- Dull blades cause injuries, so keep your tool blades sharp and remember to cut away from your body.
- Carry tools in a tool belt, apron or secure tool box – never in your pockets.
- Never carry tools in your hands when climbing a ladder or scaffold.
- Do not "toss" tools to others because you might injure somebody or possibly damage the tool.

- Look around you to ensure the path is clear before swinging a sledge hammer or similar tool.

## **FINAL WORD**

Treat hand tools with the same respect you do any piece of equipment or machinery. Remember, it is your safety, and the safety of co-workers, that is at stake.