

TOOL TYPE **HANDOUT**
GEOGRAPHY **ALL**

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SOURCE: **CPWR**

HAND TOOL SAFETY HANDOUT

BENEFITS

Many workers must use some kind of hand tool, whether a hammer or power drill, to perform their duties. But if they select the wrong hand tool or use it incorrectly, they're at risk of getting injured—and especially of developing musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs).

HOW TO USE THE TOOL

Give this handout to workers to help them understand the hazards of selecting the wrong hand tools or using the right ones incorrectly and to help them select the right tool. Adapt it for your OHS program and the requirements for hand and power tools in your jurisdiction's OHS regulations.

OTHER RESOURCES:

CPWR

Hand and Power Tool Safety Checklist

Protecting Workers from Power Tool Hazards

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HAND TOOL SAFETY HANDOUT

THE HAZARDS: If you use hand tools over and over every day, you can injure your hand, wrist or arm. For example, you can be injured if you must hold on tight for a long time or keep twisting the handle. You can develop carpal tunnel syndrome, trigger finger, white finger, tendonitis and other painful problems.

WHEN SELECTING A HAND TOOL:

- Look for a tool that needs less force to use it.
- Look for a tool that's balanced and doesn't tip forward or back when you hold it.

Look at the handle:

- It should be comfortable in your hand — not too thick, too small or too short.
- It shouldn't conduct electricity or heat.
- It shouldn't hurt your hand when you hold it tight. It shouldn't have sharp edges or ridges.
- If you can, get a non-slip handle and one with a surface made of soft materials, like rubber or plastic.
- If you need to use a lot of force on the job, the handle should be long enough for your whole hand — not just your fingers. (You want a power grip, not just a pinch grip.) You can use a long handle as a lever to add to the force of a tool and save your hand.
- If you wear gloves when you use a tool, you may need a thicker handle.
- For some tools, the handle should have a spring return, which re-opens the tool for you after you use it. The spring return saves wear and tear on your finger muscles.
- A bent angle or adjustable angle on some tools can help you keep your wrist straight on some jobs. You may need different tools on different jobs so you can keep your wrist straight.

WHEN SELECTING A POWER TOOL:

- It should have a long trigger, so you can use more than one finger at a time.
- Get a tool with lower vibration and noise levels. Too much vibration can damage the blood vessels in your hand. And if a tool vibrates, you have to grip it harder, which can hurt your muscles.
- Get a tool that's heavy enough to do the job, but not so heavy that it adds strain.

WHEN USING A HAND TOOL:

- Keep the tool sharp and in good condition. This way, you can reduce the force you must use on the tool — and reduce stress on your hands and wrist.
- Try not to use tools with your wrist bent.
- Try to rest your hands during the day. Even a perfect tool can hurt you if you must use it over and over. Lay down the tool or put it in a holster when you don't need it.

REMEMBER:

- A good hand tool improves productivity by helping you get your job done well.
- Use a *power* tool when you can. A power tool can cut the wear on your hand.
- Many tools are labeled "ergonomic" tools but don't be fooled. You're the one who can tell if a tool is comfortable and easy to use for you. Everyone has a different hand size, strength and preferences.
- One tool can't do all jobs. If you try to use a tool for a job it wasn't designed for, the job will be harder to do.
- *How* you use a tool is as important as *which* tool you use.

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