

DuPage County Environmental, Safety, Health & Property Loss Control Program Hand Tools and Supervisor's Responsibility

Purpose: To assist Supervisors in their role for the Safety of their employees.

The National Safety Council recommends that supervisors have should check over tools weekly, NSC states. If workers use their own personal tools, ensure the tools meet any necessary standards. Do not allow employees to use unsafe tools.

Using hand tools in unsafe ways is a major cause of injuries for workers. According to the 2014 edition of the council's "Injury Facts," hand-tool injuries accounted for 43,250 cases involving days away from work in 2011.

NSC recommends the following tips to help keep employees safe when working with hand tools:

- Use a bucket or bag to hoist tools from the ground to the worker. Do not carry tools up a ladder by hand.
- Never leave tools unattended and untethered in areas where they could present a fall hazard to workers below.
- Carry pointed tools in a toolbox or cart; never carry in a pocket.
- Regularly inspect tools and ensure workers know the signs of a damaged tool. Encourage reporting of unsafe tools.
- Have plenty of extra tools available in the event a worker needs a new, safe tool.
- Buy quality products. Many tools, including cutters, hammers and rock drills, should be made of steel and be heat-treated.
- Maintain tools. Tools require regular maintenance, whether by grinding or sharpening. Follow the manufacturer's directions.
- Do not ignore handles. Handles should be properly attached and, if made from wood, free of splinters.

It is the supervisor's job to ensure the tools his or her workers use are safe. This can be accomplished by following four basic work practices:

- Ensure workers use the right tool for their specific job.
- Ensure workers are using tools properly.
- Regularly inspect and properly maintain tools in good working order.
- Keep tools in a safe place.