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TOOLBOX TALK

Hand & Power Tool Safety

WHY THIS MATTERS

Hand and power tools cause over 400,000 emergency room visits every year. Lacerations, amputations, eye injuries, and electrocution are common when tools are misused, poorly maintained, or used without proper PPE. Proper training and inspection prevent injuries.

400K
Tool-related ER visits per year

#1
Cause of hand and finger amputations

100%
Tool injuries are preventable

5 Key Rules for Tool Safety

Apply these rules to every hand and power tool you use:

1. **USE THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB**
   Never improvise. Using the wrong tool leads to tool failure, loss of control, and injury.
2. **INSPECT BEFORE EVERY USE**
   Check handles, cords, guards, blades, and bits. Remove damaged tools from service.
3. **WEAR THE CORRECT PPE**
   Safety glasses, gloves, hearing protection, face shields — match PPE to the tool and task.
4. **KEEP GUARDS IN PLACE**
   Never remove, bypass, or disable safety guards on grinders, saws, or power tools.
5. **STORE TOOLS PROPERLY**
   Clean, dry, and store in designated areas. Retract blades, disconnect power, secure edges.

Before You Start — Quick Checklist

- [ ] Is this the correct tool for the task at hand?
- [ ] Has the tool been inspected for damage or defects?
- [ ] Are all guards, shields, and safety devices in place?
- [ ] Are you wearing the correct PPE for this tool?
- [ ] Is the work area clean, dry, and well-lit?

Tool Inspection Guide — Before Every Use

Handles:	Check for cracks, splinters, or loose heads on hammers, axes, and hand tools.
Cords/Plugs:	Inspect power cords for cuts, fraying, or exposed wires. Check plugs for damage.
Guards:	Verify all blade guards, wheel guards, and shields are in place and functional.
Blades/Bits:	Check for dullness, chips, cracks, or improper installation. Replace if damaged.
Switches:	Test ON/OFF switches and triggers. Must operate smoothly with no sticking.
Grounding:	Ensure power tools are properly grounded or double-insulated. Use GFCI protection.

Common Mistakes That Cause Injuries

- ✗ Removing blade guards to cut faster — guards exist to prevent amputations
- ✗ Using dull blades or bits — dull tools require more force and slip more easily
- ✗ Not wearing safety glasses — one metal chip can blind you permanently
- ✗ Using damaged tools "until they break" — damaged tools are unpredictable and dangerous
- ✗ Carrying tools with sharp edges unprotected — use sheaths, caps, or a tool bag

Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ Right tool, right job — never use pliers as a hammer or a screwdriver as a chisel
- ✓ Cut away from your body — always direct the blade or force away from yourself
- ✓ Disconnect before adjusting — unplug or lock out power tools before changing blades or bits
- ✓ Keep your workspace clean — clutter causes slips, trips, and loss of tool control
- ✓ Report damaged tools immediately — tag them out and remove from the work area

Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. What hand and power tools do we use most on this job?
2. When was the last time you inspected your tools before use?
3. Do you know where the tool inspection and tagging station is?
4. What PPE is required for the grinder? The circular saw?
5. What would you do if you found a power tool with a damaged cord?

TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: _____ Supervisor: _____

Project: _____ Location: _____

Attendance sheet attached: [ ] Yes