

Protecting Wisconsin Consumers for 75 Years

Tool safety

Families save money with do-it-yourself home improvement and maintenance, while feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment.

But when instructions are ignored and safety is neglected, these projects send over 330,000 people to the emergency room each year.

In addition to tool safety, consumers need to know the basics of ladder safety.

More than 246,000 people are injured each year in falls involving ladders. Most of these accidents occur because the victims violated the basic rules of ladder safety.

Make your home improvement project a successful one, keep the family safe!

Follow these do-it-yourself safety tips:

- Read all instruction manuals, including all labels and warnings carefully.
- Select the right tool for the job you are working on. For example using a screwdriver as a chisel may cause the tip of the screwdriver to break and fly.
- Be sure the tool you use is the right size and strength for you to control safely.
- Inspect tools thoroughly before each use, and keep them maintained.
- Always use safety goggles or glasses when working with tools.
- Always wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Use safety shoes with a reinforced toe if necessary and always use footwear that offers good traction and stability.
- Secure work with clamps or a vise, freeing both hands to operate the tool.
- Use the correct size and type of wrenches and screwdrivers to avoid slippage.
- Never use a plier as a wrench.
- Turn off power and use electrically insulated wrenches, pliers and screwdrivers when working on or around electrical components.
- Use a hammer of proper weight and size for the task with a hammer face that is 3/8" larger in diameter than the striking tool.
- Use non-sparking wrenches, pliers, screwdrivers and hammers in the presence of flammable vapors or dust.

Tips for power tools:

- Check for recalls.
- Keep cords and hoses away from heat, oil, and sharp edges.
- Never yank the cord or the hose to disconnect it from the receptacle.
- Never carry a tool by the cord or hose.
- Before using, check tools for damaged power cords, and plastic housings to prevent electrocution or other injury.
- Avoid accidental starting. The worker should not hold a finger on the switch button while carrying a plugged-in tool.
- Dull tools are unsafe and can harm the work, keep blades sharp.
- Use ground-fault circuit-interrupters with every power tool to prevent electrocution.

- Always unplug power tools before loading them, changing blades or bits, or making adjustments.
- Use and keep any guards which came with the tool, attached to the tool.
- Never use power tools in the rain.
- Be sure to keep good footing and maintain good balance.
- The proper apparel should be worn. Loose clothing, ties, or jewelry can become caught in moving parts.
- Protect yourself from hearing damage by wearing earplugs or earmuffs.
- Use a mask when working in dusty areas or with chemicals.
- Plan projects carefully, getting do-it-yourself books at libraries and advice from hardware stores.
- Know your limits.
- All observers should be kept at a safe distance away from the work area.

Ladder safety tips

Select the right ladder for the job. Be sure the ladder has ANSI & UL labels certifying it complies with the latest standards.

1. Read all labels on your ladder:

- Follow all instructions and warning labels for use of the ladder.
- Be sure to abide by any weight limitations for your

ladder. Remember to consider your weight combined with your tools and equipment weight.

2. Inspect the ladder before you use it:

- Inspect it for loose or damaged rungs, steps, rails or braces.
- Check for loose screws, bolts, hinges and other hardware.

3. Set up the ladder with care:

- Set up the ladder on a solid, level surface.
- The distance from the base of the wall to the base of the ladder should be $\frac{1}{4}$ the height of the ladder.
- Lock or block any nearby door that opens toward you.
- Keep the area around the base free of clutter.

4. Climb and descend ladders cautiously:

- Always face the ladder and hold on with both hands.
- If you need tools, carry them in a tool belt or raise and lower them with a hand line.

5. Use common sense when working on a ladder:

- Always hold on with one hand and never reach too far to either side or to the rear.
- Maintain balance by keeping your belt buckle between the ladder rails.

- Never climb higher than the second step from the top on a stepladder or the third step from the top on a straight ladder.
- Keep ladders away from electrical lines.

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

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