SAFE USE OF HAND TOOLS

The two most common hazards associated with the use of hand tools are misuse and improper maintenance. Misuse occurs when a hand tool is used for something other than its intended purpose. Improper maintenance allows hand tools to deteriorate into an unsafe condition.

General Safety Tips

• Select and use the right tool for the job
• Keep tools in good condition
• Use and maintain power tools according to the user manual
• Make sure power tools are properly grounded or are double insulated
• Unplug and put tools away after use
• Keep all guards and shields in place
• Keep bystanders at a safe distance

Personal Protective Equipment

• The type of personal protective equipment (PPE) needed when using hand tools depends on the nature of the task. At a minimum, eye protection in the form of safety glasses or googles should always be worn.

• The use of hand protection may also be appropriate to provide protection against cuts, abrasion, and repeated impact. Wearing standard cotton or leather gloves can help prevent wood splinters or skin abrasions.

• Wear clothing with no strings or loose ends to catch on things.
**Wrenches**

- Choose a wrench that properly fits the fastener that is to be turned. Using the correct size reduces the chances of wrench slippage.

- Always try to pull on a wrench (instead of pushing) in case the fastener suddenly loosens.

- Inspect wrenches periodically for damage such as cracking, severe wear, or distortion.

**Pliers**

- Do not substitute pliers for a wrench when turning nuts and bolts. Pliers cannot grip these items properly and will slip.

- Never use pliers as a hammer or hammer on the handles. Such abuse is likely to result in cracks or breaks.

- Cut hardened wire only with pliers designed for that purpose.

- Always cut at right angles. Never rock from side to side or bend the wire back and forth against the cutting edges.

**Hammers**

- Do not use a hammer if the handle is damaged or loose.

- Never weld, heat, or regrind a hammer head.

- Remove from service any hammer exhibiting signs of excessive wear such as cracks, chips, or a mushroomed head.

- Do not strike the surface at an angle. The hammer face should contact the striking surface squarely. Glancing blows made with a hammer often lead to injury.

**Screwdrivers**

- Never use a screwdriver as a pry bar, chisel, punch, stirrer, or scraper.

- Always use a screwdriver tip that properly fits the slot of the screw.

- Use magnetic or screw-holding screwdrivers to start fasteners in tight areas.
• Never use pliers on a screwdriver for extra leverage. Only use a wrench on screwdrivers specifically designed to accept them.

**Utility Knives/Blades:**

• Always use a sharp blade. Dull blades require more force and thus are more likely to slip. Replace the blade when it starts to “tear” instead of cut.

• Keep your free hand away from the line of the cut.

• Don’t bend or apply side loads to blades by using them to open cans or pry loose objects. Blades are brittle and can snap easily.