

Construction Safety Guide

Home construction is a very dangerous occupation, added to the fact that a high proportion of inexperienced people participate on a Habitat work site. Everyone must pay attention to safety; try to be conscious of the safety of others as well as yourself. Be cautious at all times and ask questions. Know your limitations and do not exceed them.

Guidelines for a Safe Attitude

- Think before you do your work or task.
- If you are uncertain on how to do a task or how to operate a power tool, ask a supervisor.
- Concentrate on your task and eliminate distractions.
- Know where the first aid kit is located and how to get emergency help.
- Inspect all power tools, hand tools, ladders, and scaffolding before using.
- Always look where you are walking. If working on a roof, never step backwards.
- Advise the supervisor immediately of any unsafe or hazardous tools or condition.

Proper Safety Equipment

- Proper clothing is as essential to safety as the proper selection and use of tools. Wear clothes and gloves that are appropriate for the work and weather conditions. Loose clothing is dangerous around power tools. Avoid wearing jewelry that hangs out.
- Workers must wear work boots or thick-soled shoes at all times on a construction site. Any worker wearing sandals or open-toed footwear will not be permitted to remain at the construction site. Sneakers or tennis shoes are acceptable but should be in good condition.
- Protective eyewear must be worn when operating a power tool or when required by a supervisor.

Power Tools

- A power tool should not be used without proper instruction on its use and on what can happen if the tool is not used properly. An inexperienced worker should use the power tool in the presence of an instructor until the instructor is satisfied that the worker knows how to use the power tool properly.
- Check for defective switches, plugs, or cords on a power tool. Defective tools should not be used and must be reported to the supervisor immediately.
- A power tool must be carried by its handle and not by its cord. Always place the power tool on a clean, dry, stable surface; do not leave it on the soil or on places where it can fall.
- Do not disable the safety devices of a power tool. If a tool's safety devices are not functional, report it to the supervisor immediately.
- Clean power tools when you are done using them; remove excess dust or dirt from them. Return them to their cases if possible.

Hand Tools/Nails

- Do not use a tool if its handle is loose or in poor condition.
- Be sure tools such as knives and saws have sharp blades. Dull tools are hazardous because excessive force must be used to make them cut.
- Do not carry sharp tools in your pocket. Use a nail apron or tool belt instead.
- Do not leave tools lying around on the ground. Put them back in tool boxes/buckets when no longer being used.
- Nails sticking out of lumber are dangerous. Remove them or bend the nails into the wood.

Ladders/Scaffolds

- Only workers who are comfortable with heights, be physically fit, and have good balance should use ladders and scaffolds.
- Inspect a ladder or scaffold before using it.
- Use a ladder that will reach the work. If both of your shoulders are extended outside the ladder, you are reaching too far. Move the ladder to get closer. When using an extension ladder, use the "4-to-1" rule: for every four feet of height, move the bottom of the ladder one foot away from the wall.
- When using a ladder to get on the roof, extend the ladder three feet above the edge of the roof.
- Place ladder on solid footing. If the feet of the ladder are not level, dig around the ground under one foot rather than raise one foot with blocks.
- For long ladders, have someone hold the ladder at the bottom. You can also prevent the top of the ladder from swinging left and right by adding guards on each side.

Clean Work Site

A clean work place is a safe work place. This refers to the neatness and good order of the construction site. Maintaining good housekeeping contributes to the efficiency of the worker and is important in preventing accidents. Position building materials and supplies in carefully laid out piles to allow adequate aisles and walkways. Clean up all rubbish and scrap materials. Do not permit blocks or wood, nails, empty cans, and trash to accumulate. They interfere with work and can create a hazard.