



# KEEP SAFE

A Monthly Publication for Texas Electric Cooperatives

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## Hand tool safety

In promoting safety, we put a lot of emphasis on safety devices such as machine guards, safety hats, safety shoes or boots, safety glasses, safety belts, respirators, guard rails and hundreds of other things. Most of us never stop to think that one of the most important safety devices we use is a good set of tools for our job.

Good tools are safety devices because they take the place of our hands, do the job our hands can't do, and keep our hands from getting hurt. When we say a tool is a safety device, we mean a tool that is right for the job, not a substitute or a makeshift.

A makeshift is any tool that is not suited for the job it's being used for. For example, using the flat side of an axe to break boulders when a rock hammer isn't handy, or using pliers instead of a wrench to loosen or tighten pipe fittings.

Using the wrong tools for the job is harmful for two reasons. First, it usually doesn't do the job and second, it requires too much uncontrolled extra energy. An improper tool can cause workers to slip or fall, gouge themselves, pinch their hands or suffer other kinds of injuries.

Another danger when using a makeshift tool is the damage inflicted on the tool itself that causes an accident when the tool is used again. Imagine trying to drive spikes with the dented flat side of an axe that was used to break boulders, or trying to dig with a shovel that was used for a pry in place of a bar.

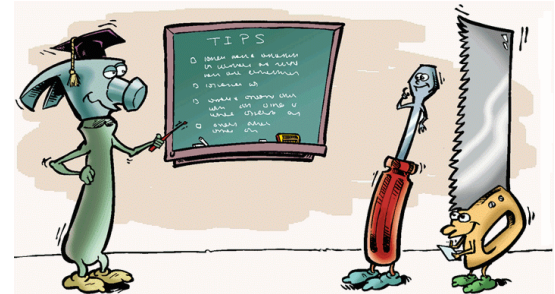
The condition of hand tools is your responsibility and the way you use them is strictly up to you.

There are three simple, easy-to-remember rules for use of hand tools that will make your work easier, quicker and safer.

### **1. Good workers take pride in their tools, and they know that to turn out good work, their tools must be in good condition.**

Start by keeping your tools in good condition. The old saying, "You can tell a good mechanic by the tools he uses," means good workers take pride in their tools, and they know that to do good work, their tools must be in good condition. If an axe or hammer handle shows the beginning of a split, replace it. Even the most carefully taped handle is never as strong and balanced as it should be.

Second, store and carry your tools properly. Many companies provide a proper tool box in or near the work area for employees' hand tools. It's up to you to store your hand tools properly. Keep tools clean and dry and in a safe place where they won't be damaged by falling material, run over by equipment, or stepped on by you or one of your co-workers.



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## 2. When you have finished using a tool, return it to the tool box or storage place.

Do not try to carry tools in your hands while climbing ladders. Carry them over your shoulder in a tool sack so your hands will be free, or hoist them in a sack or other container. Under no circumstances, should you hoist or lower portable electric hand tools by their power cords.

If you hoist or lower them by rope, tie the rope around the electric tool, not to the power cord.

Be sure to protect sharp points and the face or side of cutting tools. If you carry sharp tools, keep the edges pointed away from your body. Carry sharp tools in such a way that if you fall, you're not stabbed or slashed.

## 3. Use the right tool for the job.

Remember that every hand tool is designed to do a particular job and, if it's properly cared for and used, it makes your work easier and safer. If you've ever had to use a dull axe or saw, you know what a difference a good tool makes.

It's common knowledge that you can drive spikes or nails with almost anything - even wrenches or rocks — but it's not very fast and it's very easy to smash a finger or cause an injury. Again, use the proper tool for the job, not substitutes or makeshift.

*Injury Facts*, provided by the National Safety Council, proves that misuse of hand tools causes many accidents and injuries. Here are a few more tips for using hand tools:

- ✗ Do not overload a hand tool by extending the handle.
- ✗ When using a wrench, pull it toward you.
- ✗ Avoid striking tempered steel tools together.
- ✗ When chopping, picking or hammering, be sure to take a proper stance and strike away from your feet and legs.
- ✗ When splitting blocks, be sure your hands and fingers are in the clear.

Remember, good workers and good tools go together.

— 5 minute safety talk  
National Safety Council

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## Know when to seek emergency care

Emergency departments are designed to treat people who are critically ill or injured. For those with less urgent health problems it's usually better to seek treatment from a primary care doctor or minor emergency center. For most people without a life-threatening emergency, the average time in the ER is three hours. Even longer stays aren't unusual.

Still, ERs remain the best place to go — or be taken — for a serious and immediate health concern. Rochester, MN-based Mayo Clinic lists some of the symptoms that indicate you need emergency care:

- ✓ a sudden or unexplained loss of consciousness
- ✓ chest pain; numbness in the face, arm or leg; difficulty speaking
- ✓ severe shortness of breath
- ✓ high fever accompanied by a stiff neck, mental confusion or difficulty breathing
- ✓ coughing up or vomiting blood
- ✓ a cut or wound that won't stop bleeding
- ✓ possible broken bone

Whether you are in the waiting area, being questioned by triage nurses or examined by the doctor, speak up immediately if you are experiencing serious symptoms such as chest pain, trouble breathing, a feeling of faintness, or sudden arm or leg weakness.

Most ERs see patients according to a triage system — a process that involves sorting people according to their need for care, and the severity of their injury or illness. It's important to be proactive in offering information about your symptoms, medications and drug allergies.

To facilitate emergency care, it's a good idea to carry pertinent health information in your wallet or purse, including health insurance information, medications you take, your physician's name and phone number and any chronic health conditions you have.

— Safety+Health

# January 16<sup>th</sup> – Loss Control scholarship application deadline

The postmark deadline for the 2009 Loss Control Scholarship application is January 16<sup>th</sup>. Complete scholarship application and information can be located on Texas Electric Cooperatives website at [www.texas-ec.org](http://www.texas-ec.org).

## 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual TEC Loss Control Conference

March 25 - 27, 2009

Omni San Antonio Hotel  
at the Colonnade in San Antonio

Scholarship Golf Tournament  
March 24

### Loss Control Schools

Basic Pole Climbing School <i>Marshall</i> January 6 - 9	Transformer School <i>Fredericksburg</i> January 6 - 9	Regulator, Recloser, Capacitor School <i>Gonzales</i> January 20 - 23	Transformer School <i>Livingston</i> February 3 - 6
Regulator, Recloser, Capacitor School <i>Merkel</i> February 17 - 20	Transformer School <i>Tahoka</i> March 3 - 6	Troubleshooting School <i>Merkel</i> March 10 - 13	Underground School <i>Quitman</i> March 16 - 20
Advanced Pole Climbing <i>Gonzales</i> March 17 - 20	Basic Pole Climbing School <i>San Augustine</i> April 7 - 10	Basic Pole Climbing School <i>Gonzales</i> April 21 - 24	Hotline 1 - 4 School <i>Henderson</i> April 27 - May 1