

Defective Tools

Why Defective Tools Are a Major Threat

It is easy to get comfortable with our tools. We use them every day, and when we are in a hurry, it is tempting to use a tool that is "just a little broken" to get the job done.

But using a defective tool is like playing Russian roulette. According to safety incident reports, thousands of preventable injuries occur every year because of:

- Flying particles from chipped chisels or shattering grinding discs.
- Severe electrical shocks from frayed cords.
- Puncture wounds and deep cuts from dull blades or cracked handles.
- Lost fingers or limbs from bypassed safety guards.

The Golden Rule: Inspect Before You Use

A quick 30-second inspection before you plug a tool in or grip a handle can save you from a trip to the emergency room.

1. Hand Tools (Hammer, Chisels, Wrenches, Screwdrivers)

- **Wooden Handles:** Check for cracks, splits, or splinters. A loose hammerhead can fly off and strike a coworker with deadly force.
- **Impact Tools (Chisels, Punches):** Look for "mushroomed" heads. When struck, pieces of mushroomed metal can shatter and fly into your eyes or skin like shrapnel.
- **Wrenches:** Inspect for splayed, bent, or worn jaws. A slipping wrench will instantly result in busted knuckles or a fall.

2. Power Tools (Electric, Pneumatic, Powder-Actuated)

- **The Cord & Plug:** Look for frayed outer jackets, exposed wires, or a missing ground pin (the third prong). Never wrap electrical tape over a cut cord to keep using it.
- **Safety Guards:** Ensure all guards (such as those on circular saws or grinders) are in place, functional, and spring back freely. Never pin or tie a guard open.
- **Casing & Switches:** Check for cracked housings or triggers that stick in the "on" position.
- **Pneumatic Hoses:** Inspect for cracks, bulges, or loose couplings. Ensure safety clips/whip checks are installed at hose connections.

The "Red Tag" System: What to Do with a Bad Tool

If you find a defective tool, do not just put it back in the toolbox or gang box for the next person to find. Follow these steps immediately:

1. Stop using it immediately. Do not try to "make it work."
2. Tag it: Attach a highly visible "OUT OF SERVICE" or "DO NOT USE" tag. Write down your name, the date, and exactly what is wrong with the tool.
3. Isolate it: Move the tool to a designated quarantine area or lockbox so no one else can accidentally use it.
4. Report it: Notify your supervisor or safety coordinator so a replacement can be ordered or repaired by a qualified person.

"If it's not safe, take it out of play. Don't leave it for someone else's bad day."

DO	DON'T
Do use the right tool for the job: A screwdriver is not a pry bar; a pliers is not a hammer.	Don't bypass safety features: Never remove guards, bypass triggers, or rig a tool to run continuously.
Do wear the right PPE: Always wear safety glasses or face shields when using impact or power tools.	Don't carry tools by their cords: Never yank a cord to unplug it from an outlet and never carry a power tool by its hose or cable.
Do keep cutting tools sharp: A dull blade requires more force, making it much more likely to slip and cut you.	Don't attempt DIY repairs: Unless you are a certified tool technician, do not try to patch up electrical tools or weld broken hand tools.

Discussion Points:

- Where do we keep our "Out of Service" tags on this site?
- Have you ever had a tool fail on you mid-job? What happened, and how could it have been prevented?
- Are there any tools in our gang boxes right now that need to be retired or repaired?

Before starting your first task today, **inspect every tool you plan on using**. If you find a cracked handle, a frayed cord, or a missing guard, tag it and turn it in. Let's keep each other safe!