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Use the right tool for the job

With the rising labor cost of professional craftsmen, more and more homeowners and other do-it-yourselfers are making their own repairs to save money.

In the process of performing the unfamiliar electrical, plumbing or carpentry work, the novice may also be facing the task with hand tools either not suited for the job or misusing the ones he has. The results can be devastating, ranging from damaging costly material and tools to serious personal injury, according to the Hand Tools Institute.

This can be avoided if the tool user follows some simple rules. First, be certain that the hand tools to be used are the correct ones to do the job. For example, many persons are surprised to learn that there are at least 10 different types of wrenches, over 50 types of pliers, 12 types of screwdrivers, 15 types of hammers and many other tools that can save hours of labor and give the job a professional look.

HTI also recommends the use of safety goggles when working with hand tools. Chances are you will be picking up a variety of tools on any given job. While some have more potential for personal injury than others, it pays to protect your eyes for the duration of the project.

Here are some added pointers:

- Plastic covered plier handles are for comfort only, not protection from electrical current.
- Claw hammers are for driving and removing common, unhardened nails. Don't strike other steel tools such as chisels, punches or masonry nails with a claw hammer.
- When working with a wrench, always pull the wrench — never push the wrench.
- Never use an axe to strike a wood-splitting wedge — use a wood-chopper's maul or a sledge and never use the axe as a splitting wedge.
- Never use any struck tool, such as a chisel or punch that is chipped or mushroomed. Discard it.
- Always make certain the screwdriver tip fits snugly in the slot of the screw. A loose fit can mar the involved equipment or cause personal injury.
- Never use an extension bar such as a length of pipe to increase leverage on a wrench. This could result in breakage of the wrench and personal injury.
- Ball peen hammers of appropriate size or hand drilling hammers should be used to strike chisels, punches and star drills. Do not use the claw hammer.