



# PROPER TOOL USE

## TOOLBOX TALK: Proper Tool Use

RATTLIR Safety Series – "Strike Before It Bites"

### Purpose

Proper tool use is critical in preventing injuries, equipment damage, and unplanned downtime. Hand tools and power tools require the right selection, inspection, and technique to ensure safe operation. Using the wrong tool, or using the right tool incorrectly, remains one of the leading causes of industrial injuries in power-generation and industrial environments.

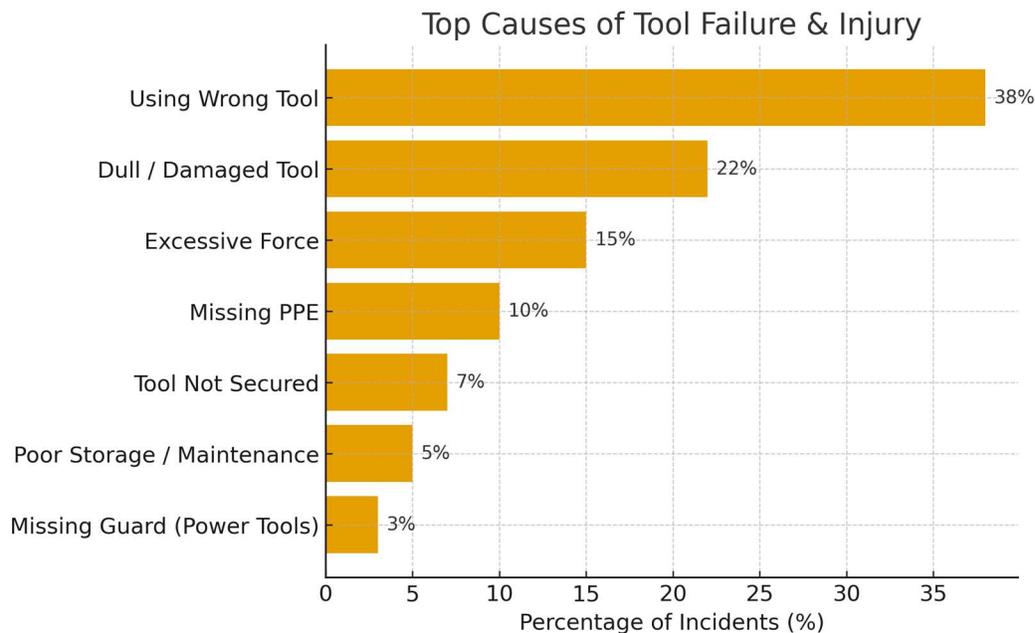


Figure 1 – Top Causes of Tool Failure & Injury

### Proper Hand Tool Use

- Select the correct tool designed for the task.
- Inspect tools for cracks, mushroomed heads, worn grips, or bent shafts before use.
- Ensure cutting tools (chisels, blades, cutters) are sharp – dull tools require excessive force and slip more easily.
- Never modify tools (grinding, welding, bending) unless approved by manufacturer.



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- Maintain a stable stance and avoid placing the body or hands in the line of fire.
- Use insulated tools when working near energized components.

## Proper Power Tool Use

- Verify guards and safety mechanisms are in place and functioning.
- Check cords, plugs, batteries, and housings for damage.
- Match wheel, blade, or attachment RPM ratings to the tool.
- Secure workpieces using clamps or vises – never hold with one hand while cutting or grinding.
- Maintain both hands on the tool when required and use auxiliary handles when provided.
- Be aware of kickback hazards – especially with grinders, saws, and impact tools.
- Disconnect power or remove batteries before changing blades or accessories.

## Understanding Tool Failure Causes

- Using the wrong tool for the job is the leading cause of tool-related injuries. Selecting the correct tool reduces force, improves control, and prevents unexpected breakage.
- Damaged or dull tools contribute to slips, line-of-fire injuries, and sudden tool failure.
- Excessive force increases the chance of tool breakage and loss of control.
- Missing PPE, especially eye and hand protection, allows minor injuries to become severe.
- Improper storage leads to rust, cracking, or dulling of edges, making tools unsafe before use.
- Missing guards on power tools exposes rotating parts and greatly increases the chance of severe injury.

## Tool Storage and Care

- Store tools in designated locations to prevent damage and ensure availability.
- Clean tools after use to prevent rust, debris buildup, and contamination.
- Lubricate moving parts on adjustable and power tools as recommended.
- Remove damaged tools from service immediately and tag them as 'Do Not Use.'



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## Discussion Questions

- Do you understand how improper tool selection leads to injuries and tool failures?
- Are your tools inspected, sharp, and in good condition for today's work?
- Do you have the correct PPE and tool-specific attachments required for the job?

## RATTLIR Takeaway

Tools are extensions of the worker – when they fail, it is usually because the wrong tool was selected, inspected poorly, or applied incorrectly. Proper tool use prevents dropped objects, line-of-fire injuries, and equipment damage. RATTLIR strikes before it bites by encouraging disciplined tool inspections, correct tool selection, and respect for the energy stored in every cut, strike, and rotation.