

Worksite Safety

Safety is everyone's concern and an important consideration at all Habitat worksites. Since Habitat work crews often contain inexperienced volunteers, everyone must pay extra attention to safety. *An observer can often see danger better than the worker directly involved in a task. Be cautious at all times and ask questions if you are uncertain how a task is performed or if you should be performing it. If you observe an unsafe condition, correct it or report it to the team leader or site supervisor immediately.*

Safety is based on knowledge, skill and an attitude of care and concern. The on-site construction supervisor will instruct volunteers in the correct and proper procedure for performing each task and will familiarize them with the potential hazards and how such hazards can be minimized or eliminated. Your team leader and the on-site construction supervisor work together to maintain a safe working environment and to ensure that everyone at the site is following safe work habits, but the ultimate responsibility for your safety lies with you. It is important that every volunteer knows about safe work practices and follows them to the letter.

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Attitude

Safety begins with a **safe attitude**. Please keep the following in mind when working on site.

1. THINK before you begin a task and DO NOT GET IN A HURRY.
2. If you are uncertain about how to perform a task or how to operate a power tool ask the on-site supervisor or team leader.
3. Avoid distractions and concentrate on the task at hand.
4. Inspect all power tools, hand tools, ladders and scaffolding before use.

5. Know where the first-aid kit is located and how to summon emergency help.
6. IMMEDIATELY advise the team leader or on-site supervisor of any unsafe or hazardous tools or conditions.

Dressing for Work

It is important to dress in a way that is practical and safe for working on site. Keep in mind that loose and inappropriate clothing can be dangerous. Follow these basic guidelines.

1. Wear clothes and gloves that fit and are appropriate for the work and weather conditions.
2. At the worksite wear work or hiking boots, or sturdy shoes that protect from falling objects. Thick, non-slip soles are safest. Any volunteer wearing sandals or other inappropriate footwear will not be permitted to remain on site.
3. Wear hard hats when working in an area where objects could be dropped or fall from above, and in low-clearance areas where there is potential for head injury. Hard hats should be available at the worksite.
4. Use protective glasses when operating power tools or when there is a possibility of eye injury, as when nailing.
5. Wear a dust mask when sanding or installing insulation.
6. Use earplugs when operating a power tool for a prolonged period. Earplugs should be available at each worksite.

The above recommendations are *minimum standards*. Depending on the task being performed, the on-site supervisor may request that volunteers take additional safety precautions.

Personal Precautions

In their enthusiasm to contribute, Habitat volunteers often exceed their personal limitations. They then pay for it through injury or sore muscles and back pain for the remainder of the project. In many cases, team members are not accustomed to manual labor, at least not for more than two days in a row. It is important that each team member recognize his/her limitations and work within them. Do not get in a hurry.



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Lifting -

Do not lift beyond your safe lifting ability. Always use the proper lifting technique: bent legs and straight, vertical back. Lift with your legs. When in doubt, ask for assistance.

Over-exertion -

Recognize your limits. Avoid struggling to keep up with other team members. When you get tired, take a break; sit down and rest, often. Habitat building is not a competitive event.

Hydration -

Physical work causes you to perspire, resulting in dehydration. Lost liquid must be replenished. When working on a HFH project, always drink more water than normal. Every job site will have drinking water available. Drink plenty.

Sun -

Many worksites are without shade. Under these conditions, always wear sunscreen and a broad-brimmed hat.

At the first indication of sunburn, reapply sunscreen and cover exposed areas with clothing. Listen to your body. Don't hesitate to stop and rest.

Power Tools and Other Electrical Equipment

A power tool should not be used without proper instruction for its use and explanation of potential consequences of misuse.

A qualified person should conduct instruction. Even experienced do-it-yourselfers may benefit from instruction. The volunteer should use the power tool in the presence of the instructor until the instructor is satisfied that the volunteer is competent in its use.

Power tools should be cleaned and checked daily for defective switches, cords, plugs, proper grounding and adjustment.

Defective tools should not be used; they should be labeled “defective” and reported to the on-site supervisor or team leader immediately. Do not wait until the end of the day to report a defective tool.

To avoid electrical shock, follow these rules:

Never lower or carry a power tool by its cord.

A three-pronged plug must be used on all electric power tools.

Extension cords must not be fastened with staples, hung from nails or suspended from wires.

Temporary lights must be equipped with non-conductive guards.

Do not use an extension cord that has frayed insulation or exposed wires.

Do not exceed the current-carrying capacity of an extension cord.

Saws require special caution.

Avoid binding a saw blade. When cutting long panels, the blade may bind, catch and kick the saw back toward the operator. Ask for assistance when cutting large pieces of material.

Maintain the blade guard. A spring-actuated blade guard that *becomes* bent won't slide effortlessly; or the spring may be stretched, making the return slow. Repair guard damage as soon as it occurs. NEVER *tie* the guard back out of the way.

Keep power cords out of the way of the saw.

Maintain solid footing and avoid overreaching.

Properly support what you are working on. Never cut something that could tilt or fall, causing the saw to slip.

Hand Tools

Always select the correct type and size of tool for the task, and make sure it is sharp or properly adjusted.

Do not use a tool if the handle is loose or in poor condition.

When using tools, hold them correctly. Most cutting tools should be held in both hands with the cutting action away from your body. Avoid using your hand or fingers as a guide to start a cut.

Handle and carry tools with care. Keep sharp-edged and pointed tools turned downward.

Retract the blade of a razor knife when not in use.

Carry only a few tools at one time unless they are mounted in a special holder or carried in a tool belt

When working with a hammer, wear a hammer loop or tool belt where the hammer is kept when not in use.]

Never place a hammer on a sloping overhead surface or in a precarious position where it could fall.

Keep tools in your tool belt when not in use.

Never carry sharp tools in your pockets.

When not in use, tools should be returned to their place of keeping - special boxes, chests or cabinets.

Do not use a power nail gun unless you are proficient in its use and the immediate work area is clear of volunteers. This tool can be very dangerous to yourself or others!

Working Aloft

Working above ground level on ladders, scaffolding, roofs or floor systems is a common source of accidents at worksites. Injuries of this type may be serious and are often due to *user error* - failing to follow safety precautions. Do not work at a height above which you are comfortable

On The Roof

Volunteers often are hesitant to work on the roof. A house roof is a safe working environment, *if* you are sure-footed, use extreme caution and follow a few simple rules:

Roof sheathing should not be cut aloft. It is much safer to send down measurements and have the sheets cut on the ground.

Always keep track of where you are in relationship to the edge of the roof.

Avoid laying tools and other items that are not in use on the roof.

Secure building materials to prevent them from sliding or being blown off the roof.

Some tasks near the edge of the roof are easier and more safely done off a ladder from below.

Do not allow scrap materials and sawdust to accumulate on the roof.

Have only as many workers on the roof as is necessary to do the job.

Do not work on the roof when the surface is wet.

Secure building materials to prevent them from sliding or being blown off the roof.

Avoid wearing leather-soled, slippery-soled shoes when working aloft.

Using Ladders

Inspect a ladder before you use it. Look for loose rungs and defects. If the ladder is unsafe, don't use it.

Use a ladder that will reach the work area. An extension ladder should extend 3 feet above the work level.

Move your ladder with your work. If both of your shoulders are extended outside the ladder while you are working, you are overreaching.

When using an extension ladder, use the *4-to-1 rule*. For every 4 feet of height, move the bottom of the ladder 1 foot away from the wall. A ladder is pitched at the proper, safe angle if you can comfortably grasp the rung at shoulder height. Place the ladder on solid footing in a safe location. If there is danger of the ladder moving while you work, tie it down. If there is danger of the ladder being hit, barricade it. If the feet of the ladder are not level, dig the ground out under one foot with the claw of a hammer instead of raising one side with a block.

Never use an aluminum ladder in the vicinity of electrical lines. Never use a ladder outdoors during inclement weather or on very sandy days.

Never use a ladder outdoors during inclement weather or on very sandy days. When climbing always face the ladder and keep your hands free for climbing. Carry tools and materials in proper carrying devices.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding that is elevated 10 feet or more should be equipped with a safety railing.

A scaffold must be designed to support four times the weight of the workers and the materials resting on unit.

Scaffolding components that are not compatible should not be mixed.

Inspect scaffolding each day before using.

Never use damaged or defective scaffolding.

When erecting scaffolding, provide adequate sills for the scaffold posts and use base plates. Use adjusting screws, not blocks, when on an uneven grade. Do not force end braces.

Plumb and level scaffolding before use.



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Defective planking causes many scaffolding accidents. Uses only properly graded and inspected lumber for planking and remove defective or damaged planks immediately.

Sub-Flooring

Laying sub-flooring often involves working on floor joists over an open basement or crawl space. Special caution should be used.

Look before you step.

Make sure you have secure footing before placing weight on a joist.

Never step on a board that is not across at least two joists; then step only in the middle.

Never step on the free end(s) of an unsecured board bridging joists.

Do not get in a hurry.

Maintaining a Safe, Clean, Secure Worksite

A clean work place is a safe work place. Keep the worksite neat and in good order. Good housekeeping improves worker efficiency and prevents accidents. Position building materials and supplies in carefully laid out piles to allow adequate aisles and walkways.

Clean up rubbish and scrap materials as you go but at least twice each day. Do not permit blocks of wood, nails, bolts, empty cans, pipe, wire or other materials to accumulate around the worksite. They interfere with the work and constitute a safety hazard.

Restock unused building materials and serviceable scraps.

Sweep out the house regularly.

Use caution when sweeping behind heavy materials.

Remove nails from discarded boards; don't just turn the board over so the nails are pointing downward. Be safe! Take the time to do the job safely, correctly and completely.

Keep tools and equipment that are not in use in their proper place. This protects both tools and workers.



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Never leave a worksite unattended unless all tools and materials have been properly secured.

No one's workday is finished until the site has been cleaned and the tools put away.

Poisons and Toxins

It is rare that Habitat volunteers encounter poisons or toxic substances on a worksite; however, there are some instances when asbestos, lead oxides, solvents or animal feces are present. Special care must be taken when you come in contact with any of these substances or any unfamiliar substance.

If you discover asbestos fiber being used as pipe, boiler or heating duct insulation, contact the on-site supervisor immediately. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REMOVE THE ASBESTOS FIBER ON YOUR OWN.**

Lead chips, dust and particles are most often encountered when scraping exterior woodwork, demolishing lead-painted walls and stripping old millwork. Contact the on-site supervisor immediately if you discover lead-painted surfaces.

Wear a mask to protect against breathing germs that can be borne in dust containing animal feces (such as rodent droppings).

Emergency Medical Care

If a person is injured on the job, contact your team leader immediately. She will direct a person to summon medical help, if needed, and obtain the worksite first-aid kit. Make the injured person comfortable and attempt to stabilize the injury until medical help arrives. Your team leader possesses an Emergency Management Plan that outlines specific procedures to follow in cases of injury or illness on the worksite. She will discuss emergency procedures with you during the team orientation.

Ten Things To Remember About Safety

1. Beware of situations that may lead to risky or dangerous conditions.
2. Your attitude is important - think safety.
3. Help maintain a clean work area. Remember, clutter leads to accidents.
4. Wear protective equipment as appropriate, including glasses, hard hats, shoes, dust masks and earplugs.
5. Report all unsafe conditions to your team leader or on-site supervisor.
6. Know the location of the first-aid kit, your location and who to contact in case of an emergency.
7. Be particularly careful about power tools and saws.
8. Demonstrate ladder safety awareness.
9. Practice safe scaffolding.
10. Do not take chances, cut corners or get in a hurry.

YOUR SAFETY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!