



CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

Introduction:

Because Habitat work crews normally have a high number of inexperienced people, everyone must pay particular attention to safety. Try to be conscious of the safety of others as well as yourself. An observer can often see danger better than the worker involved in the project. Be cautious at all times and ask questions. Do not go ahead with a task if you are uncertain as to how to complete it, or feel unable to do it.

Safety is based on knowledge, skill, and an attitude of care and concern. House leaders should instruct each worker about the correct and proper procedures for performing each task, as well as familiarizing the worker with the potential hazards of doing the task and how such hazards can be minimized or eliminated.

Guidelines for a Safe Attitude:

1. Think before you do your task.
2. If you are uncertain about how to perform a task or operate a tool, ask a supervisor.
3. Concentrate on your task and eliminate distractions.
4. Know where the first aid kit is located and how to get emergency help.
5. Inspect all power tools, hand tools, ladders, and scaffolding before you use them.
6. Advise your House Leader immediately of any unsafe condition or hazard.

Proper Safety Equipment:

Proper clothing is as essential to safety as the proper selection and use of tools. Wear clothes and gloves that are appropriate for the work and weather conditions. Work shoes or other appropriate footwear will be worn. Sandals are not permitted.

Hard hats will be worn while roof work is being completed. Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio will supply the necessary number of hard hats.

A worker will wear protective glasses at all times on the Habitat construction site – NO EXCEPTIONS!

Power Tools and Other Electrical Equipment:

Use a power tool only after you have received proper instruction on its use and on the consequences of improper use. Personal power tools should not be brought to the job site under any circumstances.

Clean tools daily. Check power tools for defective switches, cords, plugs, and proper grounding. Do not use defective power tools; report the defect immediately to the house leader.

Hand Tools:

Always select the correct type and size of tool for your work and be certain that it is properly adjusted. Do not use tools that have loose handles or are otherwise in poor condition. Dull tools are hazardous because excessive force must be used to make them cut. Oil or dirt on a tool may cause it to slip and cause an injury. When using tools; hold them correctly. If you do not know the correct way to use a tool, get instructions from the houseleader. When working with a hammer, make certain that it is kept securely in the tool belt and not placed on a sloping surface or in an unsafe position. Do not carry sharp tools in pockets.

A Special Word on Saws:

1. Do not bind the blade of any saw. Always leave one end of the piece you are cutting free to fall. If a saw blade binds, the saw will kick back towards the operator.

2. Keep the blade guard working. A spring-actuated blade guard can often become bent, preventing it from sliding quickly. Never tie the guard back out of the way or use a saw without a guard.
3. Support your materials properly. Never attempt to cut something that could tilt or fall and cause the saw to slip.

Ladders:

Inspect a ladder before you use it. If a ladder is unsafe, do not use it. Use a ladder that will reach your work. An extension ladder should reach three feet above the work level. Move your ladder with the work. If both of your shoulders are extended outside the ladder, you are reaching too far. When using an extension ladder, use the "four to one" rule: For every four feet of height, move the bottom of the ladder one foot away from the wall.

Place your ladder on solid footing. Never use an aluminum ladder in the vicinity of electrical lines, and never use a ladder outdoors during inclement weather or on a windy day.

Carry tools and materials in proper carrying devices, and keep your hands free for climbing. When climbing, always face the ladder.

Scaffolding:

Do not use scaffolding over eight feet in elevation. Inspect all scaffolding each day before using it. Never use damaged or defective equipment, and avoid rusted parts, because their strength is undetermined. Make sure you plumb and level scaffolding and have adequate footing for each post. A set of braces must be used on each side of the scaffold. Do not force end braces when constructing the scaffolding.

Many scaffolding accidents are caused by defective planks. Use only properly graded and inspected lumber for planking. Inspect throughout the day to insure that planking is extending well over the supporting pipe.

Work Site Cleanliness:

A clean work place is a safe work place. This refers to the neatness and good order of the construction site. Maintaining good housekeeping contributes to the efficiency of the worker and is important in preventing accidents.

Always remove nails from scrap lumber before you lay it down. Clean up rubbish and scrap materials daily. Do not permit blocks of wood, nails, empty cans, pipe, wire, or other material to accumulate on the work site, since they interfere with work and can create a hazard. Keep unused tools and equipment in chests or tool boxes. Never leave a work site unguarded unless all tools and materials have been secured.

Poisons and Toxic Substances:

The poisons and toxic substances that are most often found on a Habitat construction site are lead oxides and solvents. Special care should be taken around such substances or any unfamiliar substances. Painting and cleaning solvents should be stored in labeled containers with safety instructions.

Personal Safety Program

In order to continue our outstanding record of safety, Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio (HFHSA) is instituting a Personal Safety Program. AmeriCorps Members and volunteers are not permitted, at any time, to work alone on a Habitat worksite, inside a Habitat home, in the construction warehouse, ReStore, or Habitat office.

Unaccompanied volunteers * are required to work together at one site in one of the following minimum combinations:

- Two volunteers and/or a full time HFHSA staff member of the same gender.
- Three volunteers and/or a full time HFHSA staff member of the same gender.

**An unaccompanied volunteer is a volunteer who does not have an established relationship with the other volunteer(s) he or she is working with prior to the volunteer experience.*