When was the last time you paid any attention to your hand tool and/or power tool safety program? When was the last time that:

- Tools were inspected for their condition?
- A safety program on safe tool use was offered?
- You corrected someone for improper or unsafe use of a tool?

Name the tool, and examples of injury can be given as a result of improper use or improper maintenance of that tool. Shovels, forks, hammers, wrenches, screwdrivers and knives are but some of the hand tools which cause injury. Among the portable power tools (drills, saws, grinders, etc.), lawn mowers and chain saws cause numerous injuries.

Each year hundreds of agricultural employees are seriously injured while using hand or power tools; thousands experience minor injuries. The injuries consist of bruises, punctures, eye injuries, and amputations. The infrequent deaths are from electrocution and severe lacerations.

**SAFETY WITH HAND TOOLS**

In developing a hand tool safety program for your employees, your family, or yourself, the following factors should be given emphasis.

- Use the proper tool for the task.
- Store the tools properly. Reaching into a cluttered tool box with sharp tools can lead to serious cuts.
- Tools should be kept in good condition. Handles should be tight and sliver-free. Sharp tools should be sharp. The heads of chisels, punches or hammers should be flat, not mushroomed.
- Wear goggles when there is a risk of flying particles.
- Keep tools free of grease or oil, which would cause them to slip.
- Use tools in a manner so that a slip or miss does not result in a cut or hit to the user.
- Use a vise or clamps to hold small objects while working with them.
- Practice good housekeeping in all work areas and wear slip-resistant shoes.
- Provide adequate lighting.
- A hard hat, gloves and other protective equipment might be required for certain tasks and some locations. Make certain that this equipment is available and worn.
SAFETY WITH POWER TOOLS

A power tool safety program includes many of the same factors as listed for hand tools. Use the proper tools. Store them properly. Keep them in good condition. Use vises and clamps to hold small objects. Provide adequate lighting, practice good housekeeping, and wear the proper personal protective equipment.

With electrical power tools there are a few other important "musts". They are as follows:

- Electrical tools must always protect the user from electrical shock or electrocution. This can be done by providing "double-insulated" tools, three-wired cords with the ground wire connected, and/or by use of a ground fault circuit interrupter.

- Avoid working with electrical power tools in damp or wet areas. If this cannot be avoided, always wear gloves and footwear designed for use when working with electricity.

- Never carry tools by the cord; never disconnect them by "yanking" on them.

- Always disconnect tools when not in use and before servicing them or charging accessories.

- Damaged electrical power tools must be removed from service and be tagged "Do not use".

SAFETY WITH GASOLINE-POWERED TOOLS

Gasoline-powered tools (chain saws, lawn mowers, etc.) also require the use of personal protective equipment, attention to storage, conditions and safe use. Refueling is a special concern: 1) make sure the engine has cooled before refueling; 2) refuel in well-ventilated areas; 3) replace the tank cap and wipe up spills before restarting the engine.

There are some other safety practices, however, which apply to all power tools, electric- or gasoline-powered. The most important of these are:

- Read and heed the operator's manual.

- Read and heed all safety decals on the equipment.

- Keep all guards and shields in place at all times.

- Do not by-pass, disconnect, or in any manner void any of the safety features built into the equipment.

- Keep power equipment away from young children and adults not trained in the safe and proper use of the equipment.

AN ADDITIONAL PROBLEM IN USING TOOLS

A final problem with some hand and power tools is the constant, regular movement of the hand and wrist when using a tool. This can lead to carpal tunnel syndrome, a condition which develops in the wrist and results in an aching type of pain in the hand. Left unattended, the problem can become severe and disabling.

Prevention is the best treatment. The task might be changed, the tools might be redesigned to reduce stress on the hand or wrist, special gloves might provide protection, or other corrective actions might be taken. The important action is to identify the problem early and then redesign the task or move the employee to other tasks which do not require the same repetitive hand and wrist activity.

TOOL SAFETY IN AND AROUND THE HOME

Tool safety is not just an on-the-job problem; it is an even greater problem in many homes. Why? Because at most work locations, at least some education in tool safety is provided and no young children are around to be injured by the tools. But few home families have much of a tool safety program. Therefore, every family should read this fact sheet for some safety ideas which can be used in and around your home. A few major additions to a home safety program would be:

- Keep small children away—far away—when using power equipment in and around the home. It is not a safe place for a child if power mowers, saws, hedges, edgers, hatchets or sharp tools are being used. The same is true with hot coffee pots, hot pots and pans on the stove, electrical appliances, and sharp objects; keep them out of the reach of small children.

- Every electrical appliance should carry a nationally recognized safety seal, or it should be discarded. Electrical appliances used around water, like in a kitchen or bathroom, should be plugged into wall receptacles equipped with a
ground fault circuit interrupter.