**Toolbox Talk – Hand Tool Safety**

**Relevant Legislation:**

* *WHS Act (Section 19 – Primary Duty of Care), WHS Regulation (Part 3.1 – Managing Risks to Health and Safety)* – *Applies in NSW, QLD, SA, NT, ACT, TAS, and Commonwealth jurisdictions*
* *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) – Section 21 (Duties of Employers), Section 25 (Duties of Employees)*

**Why these matters**

Hand tools are used every day on job sites, in workshops, and in maintenance roles. But just because they’re basic doesn’t mean they’re harmless. Misuse or poor maintenance of tools can lead to injuries, including cuts, sprains, crush injuries, eye injuries, or worse. This talk outlines how to safely select, use, maintain, and store hand tools in line with Australian safety laws.

**Key Risks**

* Cuts, punctures, and lacerations (e.g., from blades, chisels, screwdrivers)
* Eye injuries from flying metal, wood, or debris
* Crush injuries from hammers, pinch points or tool slips
* Muscle strain or repetitive strain from poor technique or overuse
* Electrical shock if tools are used near live wiring without control measures
* Infection risks from dirty, rusty or contaminated tools

**Safe Work Practices**

1. **Use the Right Tool for the Job**
   * Don't force tools to do tasks they’re not designed for (e.g., don’t use pliers as a hammer).
   * Always follow manufacturer instructions and safety guidelines.
2. **Inspect Tools Before Use**
   * Check for cracks, loose parts, frayed grips, rust, or damaged blades.
   * Tag out damaged tools and report them to your supervisor.
3. **Wear the Correct PPE**
   * Safety glasses to protect against flying particles.
   * Gloves for handling sharp or rough materials (check compatibility).
   * Enclosed footwear with toe protection.
4. **Correct Technique**
   * Keep body parts away from tool paths.
   * Avoid excessive force – it can cause tools to slip or snap.
   * Use clamps or vices where possible to secure workpieces.
5. **Safe Storage and Transport**
   * Store tools properly – no sharp edges exposed.
   * Don’t carry tools in pockets; use tool belts or cases.
   * Secure tools when working at heights to prevent dropping them.
6. **Keep Tools Clean and Maintained**
   * Wipe down tools after use.
   * Sharpen blades and cutting tools regularly.
   * Lubricate moving parts if needed and protect from moisture.

**Legal Responsibilities**

Under both the WHS and OH&S legislation:

* **Employers/PCBUs** must provide safe tools, training, and instruction and ensure tools are maintained in safe condition.
* **Workers** must use tools safely, follow procedures, and report hazards or defective equipment.
* **Supervisors** must ensure that safe systems of work are in place and that hand tools are regularly inspected.

**Discussion Points**

* Have you ever used a tool that wasn’t fit for the purpose or was in poor condition?
* Do we have a system for tagging out broken tools and getting them repaired or replaced?
* Are all workers trained in the safe use of specialised hand tools on-site?

**Takeaway Message**

**Hand tools are only safe when used correctly and kept in good condition.** Don’t take shortcuts – inspect tools, use them properly, wear your PPE, and report anything that doesn’t look right.