



Volunteer Construction Safety and Dress Code

Introduction

Safety is everybody's concern at Erath County Habitat for Humanity (Habitat) and is always an important consideration at any construction site. Building construction can be one of the most dangerous occupations. Since Habitat work crews normally have a high proportion of inexperienced people, everyone must pay particular attention to safety. Every volunteer, partner family, and worker must 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. Everyone must be cautious at all times and ask questions. Do not go ahead with a task if you are uncertain as to how it is done, or if you are unable to do it.

Safety is based on knowledge, skill, and an attitude of care and concern. Construction Crew leaders and Safety Officers will instruct each worker about the correct and proper procedures for performing each task and familiarize the worker with the potential hazards of doing the tasks and how such hazards can be minimized or eliminated. It is very important that all volunteers and workers at Habitat know about safe work practices and follow them.

Guidelines for a Safe Attitude

1. **Think** before you do your work or task.
2. **Ask a Construction Crew Leader or Safety Officer for assistance** if you are uncertain about how to do a task or how to operate a power tool.
3. **Concentrate on your task** and eliminate distractions.
4. **Know the location of the first-aid kit** and how to get emergency help.
5. **Inspect all tools on a daily basis** including power tools, hand tools, ladders, and scaffolding.
6. **Advise a Construction Crew Leader or Safety Officer immediately** of any unsafe condition or hazard.

Proper Safety Equipment and Construction Dress Code

Proper clothing is as essential to safety as the proper selection and use of tools. Every person (volunteer, partner family, and worker) on a Habitat construction work site should wear clothes and gloves that are appropriate for the work and weather conditions. Loose clothing is dangerous around power tools. The following are essentials on any Habitat construction work site:

- **Footwear** – Closed toe shoes only. Work boots are preferred but thick-soled tennis shoes are allowed.
- **Pants/Shorts** – Due to the nature of the construction work involved, long pants are preferred. However, shorts are permitted, but cannot be shorter than mid-thigh. No overly baggy pants should be worn.
- **Shirts with sleeves** – Shirts are required at all times.
- **Jewelry** – Must not be dangly or bulky.

- **Protective Glasses** – Are provided by Habitat, and are available for all construction site volunteers/workers. A worker must wear protective glasses any time he or she is operating a power tool or when instructed by a Habitat construction site crew leader or safety officer.
- **Dust Masks** – Are provided by Habitat, and are available for all construction site volunteers/workers installing insulation, sanding, or when instructed by a Habitat construction site crew leader or safety officer.
- **Ear Plugs** – Are provided by Habitat, and are available for all construction site volunteers/workers using a power tool or when instructed by a Habitat construction site crew chief or safety officer.

Power Tools and Other Electrical Equipment

A power tool should not be used without proper instruction on its use and on the consequences of improper use. The instruction should be done by a qualified person and should be given to all workers, even experienced “do-it-yourselfers”. The trainee should use the power tool in the presence of the instructor, until the instructor is satisfied that the trainee knows how to use the power tool properly.

Never lower or carry a power tool by its cord. Clean tools daily. Power tools should be checked for defective switches, cords, plugs, and proper grounding. Defective tools should not be used and should either be reported to a Construction Crew leader or Safety Officer or labeled and turned in for repair immediately.

To avoid electrical shock, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. A three-pronged plug must be used on all electric power tools.
2. Extension cords must not have frayed insulation or be fastened with staples, hung from nails, or suspended from wires.
3. All temporary lights must be equipped with nonconductive guards.

Hand Tools

Always select the correct type and size of tool for your work and be sure it is sharp and properly adjusted. Guard against using any tool if the handle is loose or in poor condition. Dull tools are hazardous to use 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. Most edge tools should be held in both hands with the cutting action away from yourself. Avoid using your hand or fingers as a guide to start a cut, always use extreme caution.

Handle and carry tools with care. Keep edged and pointed tools turned downward. Carry only a few tools at one time, unless they are mounted in a special holder or carried in a tool belt. Anyone working with a hammer at a height should wear a hammer loop or tool belt. When the hammer is not in use, it should be kept in the loop or belt and not placed on a sloping surface or other precarious position. Do not carry sharp tools in your pockets. When the tools are not in use, they should be kept in special boxes, chests or cabinets.

Saws

Don't bind the blade of any saw. When cutting long panels, the blade may bind, and the saw mill will catch and kick back toward the operator. Use small wood wedges or shim shingles to

spread the saw cut as you go along.

Keep the blade guard working. A spring-actuated blade guard often bends and won't slide quickly, or the spring stretches so the return is slow. Repair any damage to the guard as soon as it happens, and never tie the guard back out of the way.

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

Ladders

The following rules for ladder safety should be adhered to at all times:

1. **If the ladder is unsafe, don't use it.** Always inspect a ladder before you use it.
2. **Use a ladder that will reach the work.**
3. **Extension ladders should reach 3 feet above the work level.** Use the four-to-one rule: For every 4 feet of height, move the bottom of the ladder 1 foot away from the wall.
4. **Move your ladder with your work, rather than leaning out to reach the work.** If both your shoulders are extended outside the ladder while you are working, you are reaching too far.
5. **Place your ladder on solid footing.**
6. **NEVER** use an aluminum ladder in the vicinity of electrical lines, and **NEVER** use a ladder outdoors during inclement weather or on windy days.
7. **Keep your hands free for climbing.** Always face the ladder when climbing.

Clean Work Site

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.

Position building materials and supplies in carefully laid out piles to allow adequate aisles and walkways. Clean up all rubbish and scrap materials on a daily basis. Do not permit blocks of wood, nails, bolts, empty cans, pipe, wire, or other materials to accumulate on the work site, since they interfere with work and can constitute a hazard. Keep tools and equipment which are not being used in chests, panels or tool boxes.

Never leave a work site unguarded unless all tools and materials have been properly secured.