

New Tools from Santa

So you got new tools for Christmas, and now you're ready to build that thingamajig you've been dreaming of. Before you use that new tool, there are a few safety tips to think about.

I remember attending a local workshop demonstration of new power tools, and one of the attending tool manufacturers was demonstrating a circular saw while his associate watched standing just behind the saw.

There was no reminder that a power saw has a tendency to 'kick' backward when the blade is pushed too hard. Just then the saw kicked backward; there was a good chance that someone could have been injured. These were professionals, but they forgot some very basic shop safety rules.

- Read the Owners Manual supplied before using any new equipment.
- Always use safety glasses or goggles.
- Use earplugs to protect your hearing.
- Keep gloves and clothing away from moving parts of machinery. That goes for long hair, too.
- Power saw blades have protective guards. Make sure the guards are in a good working condition. Saw blades should come to a full stop before you set the saws down or move stock on a table saw.
- When using a drill, do not press too hard against the drill. The bit could break or slip, and you could be injured.
- Do not use a screwdriver as a chisel. The steel tips are not as hard, and the metal can splinter or break and become a flying missile.

- When using outdoor electrical tools, you should have a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlet for protection.
- If you have to push or place a lot of pressure when using a wrench, think about what can happen if the wrench should slip. Busted knuckles will heal, but a fall from a ladder could be fatal.
- Keep torches and soldering guns away from flammable materials. Hot soldering guns and falling solder cause serious burns or damage decorative surfaces.

Most shop injuries are caused by careless use of the common hammer. Gently tap a nail or brad to get it started, and then move your fingers out of the way before driving the nail home. Make sure there is enough room to swing the hammer without having it bounce off another object, striking you in the head. That's right, I have seen experienced carpenters knock themselves silly trying to hammer in a confined space.

