



## Work Site Safety

Safety is everyone's concern and an important consideration at all Habitat work sites. Since Habitat work crews often contain inexperienced volunteers, everyone must pay extra attention to safety. An observer can often see danger better than the worker directly involved in a task. Be cautious at all times and ask questions if you are uncertain how a task is performed or if you should be performing it.

Safety is based on knowledge, skill and an attitude of care and concern. The on-site construction supervisor will instruct volunteers in the correct and proper procedure for performing each task and will familiarize you with the potential hazards and how such hazards can be minimized or eliminated. Your crew leaders and local Habitat staff work together to maintain a safe working environment and to ensure that everyone at the site is following safe work habits. It is important that every volunteer knows about safe work practices and follows them to the letter. The final responsibility for each team member's personal safety lies with that individual member.

### *Ten Things to Remember Regarding Safety*

1. Be aware of situations that may lead to risky or dangerous conditions.
2. Your attitude is important—think safety.
3. Help maintain a clean work area. Remember, clutter leads to accidents.
4. Wear the necessary protective equipment, including glasses, hard hat, shoes, dust mask and earplugs.
5. Do not take chances.
6. Report all unsafe conditions to your team leader or on-site supervisor.
7. Know the location of the first aid kit and whom to contact in case of an emergency.
8. Be particularly careful about power tools and saws.
9. Demonstrate ladder-safety awareness and practice safe scaffolding.
- 10. Safety is everyone's number one job!**

### **Attitude**

Safety begins with a safe attitude. Please keep the following in mind when working on-site:

- THINK before you begin a task.
- If you are uncertain about how to perform a task or how to operate a tool—ask.
- Avoid distractions and concentrate on the task at hand.
- Inspect all tools, ladders and scaffolding before use.
- IMMEDIATELY advise the team leader of any unsafe or hazardous tools or conditions.
- Know where the first-aid kit is located and how to summon emergency help.

## Dressing for Work

It is important to dress in a way that is practical and safe for the work being done. Keep in mind that loose clothing can be dangerous. Follow these basic guidelines:

- Wear clothes and gloves that are appropriate for the work and weather conditions.
- Wear work boots or thick-soled shoes at all times on-site. Any volunteer wearing sandals or another type of inappropriate footwear will not be permitted to remain on-site.
- Wear hardhats while doing demolition work and when others are working overhead. Hardhats, if required, will be available at each work site.
- Use ANSI approved ( Z87+) protective glasses when there is any possibility of eye injury.
- Wear a dust mask when sanding or installing insulation.
- Use earplugs when using a power tool for a prolonged period. Earplugs, if needed, are available at each work site.

The above recommendations are minimum standards. Depending on the work being performed, a staff member or crew leader may request that volunteers take additional safety precautions.



## Personal Precautions

In their enthusiasm to contribute, Habitat volunteers sometimes exceed their personal limitations. They then pay for it through injury or sore muscles and back pain for the remainder of the project. In many cases, team members are not accustomed to extended manual labor. It is important that each team member recognize his/her limitations and work within them.

- **Lifting**—always use the proper lifting technique: bent legs and straight, vertical back. Do not exceed your lifting capacity.
- **Over exertion**—recognize your limits. Avoid struggling to keep up with other team members. When you get tired, take a break; sit down and rest often.
- **Hydration**—physical work causes you to perspire, resulting in dehydration, unless lost liquid is replenished. When working on a Habitat project, always drink more water than normal. Every job site will have safe drinking water available. Drink plenty.
- **Sun**—many work sites are without shade. Under these conditions, always wear sunscreen and a broad-brimmed hat. At the first indication of sunburn, reapply sunscreen and cover exposed areas with clothing.

### **Maintaining a Safe, Clean, Secure Work Site**

“A clean workplace is a safe workplace” refers to the neatness and good order of the work site. Good housekeeping prevents accidents.

- Clean up rubbish and scrap materials daily. Do not permit blocks of wood, nails, bolts, empty cans, pipe, wire or other materials to accumulate around the work site.
- Keep tools and equipment in their proper places when not in use. This protects both tools and workers.

### **Power Tools and Other Electrical Equipment**

- You must be 18 years of age or older to use power tools.
- Do not wear loose fitting or gloves around rotary tools such as a circular saw.
- A power tool should not be used without proper instruction in its use and explanation of the potential consequences of misuse. Ask a crew leader or staff member for assistance.
- Defective tools should not be used; they should be reported to the team leader immediately. Do not wait until the end of the day to report a defective tool.
- Do not use a power nail gun unless you are proficient in its use and the immediate work area is clear of volunteers. This tool can be very dangerous to yourself and others!



### **Hand Tools**

- Always select the correct type and size of tool for the task, and make sure it is sharp or properly adjusted.
- Do not use a tool if the handle is loose or in poor condition.
- When using tools, hold them correctly. Most cutting tools should be held in both hands with the cutting action away from your body. Avoid using your hand or fingers as a guide to start a cut.
- Handle and carry tools with care. Keep sharp-edged and pointed tools turned away or downward.
- When working with a hammer, wear a hammer loop or tool belt where the hammer can be kept when not in use.
- Never place a tool on a sloping overhead surface or in a precarious position where it could fall.
- When not in use, tools should be returned to their places of keeping—special boxes, chests or cabinets.

## Working Aloft

Working above ground level on ladders, scaffolding or roofs is a common source of accidents on work sites. In fact, the #1 cause of reported job site injuries is spontaneous falling. Injuries of this type may be serious and are often due to user error—failing to follow safety precautions, so it is very important to consider safety when a task requires working aloft.

## Ladders

- Inspect a ladder before you use it. Look for wear and tear, loose rungs and defects. If the ladder is unsafe, don't use it.
- A-Frame ladders should be opened fully and not be leaned.
- Do not leave tools on top of an A-Frame Ladder.
- Use a ladder that will reach the work area. An extension ladder should extend three feet above the work level.
- Move your ladder with your work. If both of your shoulders are extended outside the ladder while you are working, you are overreaching.
- 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. A ladder is pitched at the proper, safe angle if you can comfortably grasp the rung at shoulder height.
- Place the ladder on solid footing in a safe location. If there is danger of the ladder moving while you work, tie it down. If there is danger of the ladder being hit, barricade it. If the feet of the ladder are not level, dig the ground out under one foot instead of raising the other with a block.
- When climbing, always face the ladder and keep your hands free for climbing. Carry tools and materials in proper carrying devices.



## Scaffolding

- A scaffold must be designed to support four times the weight of the workers and the materials resting on it.
- Scaffolding components that are not compatible should not be mixed. • Inspect scaffolding each day before using.
- When erecting scaffolding, provide adequate sills for the scaffold posts and use base plates. Use adjusting screws, not blocks, when on an uneven grade. Do not force end braces.
- Defective planking causes many scaffolding accidents. Use only properly graded and inspected lumber for planking and inspect them daily for splits and knots; remove defective or damaged planks immediately.

## Roofs

Use extreme caution and follow a few simple rules when working on a roof:

- Roof materials should not be cut aloft. It is much safer to send down measurements and have the sheets cut on the ground.
- Always keep track of where you are in relation to the edge of the roof and never walk backwards.
- Avoid laying tools and other items on the roof when not in use.
- Secure building materials to prevent them from sliding or being blown off the roof.
- Some tasks along the edge of the roof are easier and more safely done off a ladder from below.
- Do not allow scrap materials and sawdust to accumulate on the roof.
- Do not work on the roof when the surface is wet.
- Secure the access ladder to the edge of the roof to prevent the ladder from moving.
- Do not throw items from the roof unless someone on the ground declares the landing area “all clear” and prevents others from entering the area until the thrown item has landed.
- Avoid wearing leather-soled or slippery-soled shoes when working aloft.

## Emergency Medical Care

If a person is injured on the job, contact a crew leader and/or Habitat staff member immediately. S/he will direct a person to summon medical help, if needed, and obtain the work-site first-aid kit. Make the injured person comfortable and attempt to stabilize the injury until medical help arrives. First Aid certified individuals should be identified at the start of each work day.

