

VOLUNTEER PROJECT SAFETY

Review the work your team will be doing to identify any safety hazards. Discuss hazards with the people that work at the site on a regular basis. Use the team's knowledge and experience to help identify any hazards associated with the project. Before starting the project, and whenever new people begin work, have a safety minute to discuss hazards and other safety information. Here are some Safety Minute Guides to help you. Use the ones that are appropriate for your project. Also look for hazards that may not be addressed in the Guides and talk to your team about these:

- You may need more than one guide. If, for example, you are doing a painting project, you may want to review "Ladder Safety" and the section on Eye Protection in the "Choose and Use Personal Protective Equipment."
- If you are doing a landscaping project, use appropriate sections of "Working Outdoors," "Working Safely in the Heat," "Proper Lifting," and "Tool Safety."
- Some projects may use a piece of all of these guides and some may use none.

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- [**Choose and Use Personal Protective Equipment**](#)
 - [**Ladder Safety**](#)
 - [**Proper Lifting**](#)
 - [**Tool Safety**](#)
 - [**Working Outdoors**](#)
 - [**Working Safely in the Heat**](#)
 - [**Cooking and Serving Food**](#)

CHOOSE AND USE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Many people don't realize how many activities require wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). PPE can provide eye protection, hand protection, head protection, hearing protection, and protection against other hazards. Choose the proper PPE for the work that you are performing. Take a few minutes to review with your team the importance of using PPE to reduce the chance of injury.

EYE PROTECTION

One of the most common types of PPE is eye protection. Proper eye protection should be chosen based on the hazard. Two of the more common types of hazards are:

- Flying objects such as wood, metal, plastic, stone fragments, and sparks etc. – Wear safety glasses or goggles with side protection.
- Splashes from chemicals (even household cleaners), etc. – Wear goggles or safety glasses and a face shield.

HEAD PROTECTION

In some tasks, there can be injury to the head. Always wear a hard hat if there is the possibility for injury from:

- Impact and penetration from bumping your head.
- Impact and penetration from falling tools or materials when there are workers, machines, conveyor belts, etc. above you.
- Impact and penetration from objects being carried or swung nearby.

Make sure the hard hat is not damaged. Get a comfortable fit and adjust the headband so that the hat itself doesn't touch your head.

HAND PROTECTION

Your project may involve handling materials that can cause injury to the hand. Here are some common hazards and the types of gloves that should be worn.

- Chemicals – Common household cleaners can irritate the skin so remember to supply your volunteers with the appropriate kind of gloves.
- Chips, sparks, and rough surfaces – Leather gloves.
- Heat and cold – Insulated gloves.
- Splinters, dirt, and abrasions – Cotton gloves.
- Inspect gloves before use to make sure they are not torn or damaged. Don't wear gloves for jobs where they could get caught in moving parts.

FOOT PROTECTION

Often we don't think about shoes as PPE because we wear shoes all the time. They are there to protect our feet. When you submit your projects, be sure to specify if your volunteers should wear a specific type of shoes, i.e. closed toe, sturdy or comfortable.

EAR PROTECTION

There may be activities that require ear protection. A good rule of thumb is: if you are standing next to a person and you have to shout to be heard, ear protection should be worn. Use ear plugs or ear muffs designed to reduce the amount of noise the ear is exposed to. Never use cotton, stereo headsets, or other makeshift devices.

LADDER SAFETY

Most of us have used ladders and not thought much about them. Some people are more comfortable on ladders than others. If you are using a ladder on your project, take a moment to review ladder safety and remember that even a short fall can seriously injure someone.

MAKE SURE THE LADDER YOU ARE USING IS THE PROPER ONE

- Make sure it is tall enough to reach the height you need.
- Make sure it is rated to handle the combined weight of you and your equipment. Ladders are rated I-A (Holds 300 pounds), I (250 pounds), II (225 pounds), III (200 pounds)

CHECK THAT THE LADDER IS IN GOOD CONDITION

- Slip resistant steps or rungs.
- Safety feet are in place and in good condition.
- Check braces, bolts, screws, and spreaders.

POSITION THE LADDER PROPERLY

- The ladder should be on a level surface.
- When using extension ladders, the feet should be placed parallel to the wall at a distance that is equal to one-fourth the ladder length.
- If an extension ladder is used to access a higher level, such as a roof, the ladder should be extended at least three feet above the top support with top anchored and bottom tied or held.

ALWAYS WORK CAUTIOUSLY ON A LADDER TO PREVENT FALLS

Follow these rules when using the ladder:

- Allow one person only on a ladder, wearing shoes with clean, nonskid soles.
- Face the ladder and hold both rails while climbing.
- Carry tools on a belt or rope hoist.
- Stay below the top two stepladder steps or four top ladder rungs.
- Work with body centered, one hand on rail, and tools in hanger or holder.

PROPER LIFTING

Back injuries account for 1 in 5 work related injuries. Be very careful when lifting, especially if you don't do a lifting on a regular basis. Take a few minutes to review these simple but important lifting tips with your project team.

PLAN AHEAD

- Lift a corner of the load to decide if you can safely lift and carry it.
- If in doubt, use a dolly, hand truck, or get help.
- Plan a straight, flat route; remove anything in your way.
- Loosen muscles with gentle bends and stretches.
- Wear gloves and sturdy shoes with nonskid soles.
- Avoid loose clothing you could trip over.

LIFTING

- Stand close to the load.
- Squat, with knees bent and back straight.
- Grip firmly.
- Bring the load close to your body.
- Push up slowly with your legs.

CARRYING

- Carry the load waist high.
- Take small steps.
- Move your feet to change direction. **Don't twist!**

PLACING

- Lower the load slowly, knees bent.
- Place the load on the edge of the surface and slide it back.

TOOL SAFETY

Often we need to use tools to get the job done. There are some basic safety rules to remember when using tools. Even something as common as a screwdriver can cause an injury if used improperly. Consider what tools will be used in your project and take a few minutes to review tool safety with your team.

HAND TOOLS

- Select the right tool (including proper size) for the job.
- Do not use damaged tools.
- Hand tools to another person handle first; don't throw them.
- Carry pointed or sharp tools with the dangerous edges away from your body.

- Wear safety glasses to protect against flying objects.
- Avoid wearing jewelry or loose clothes that could get caught in tools.
- Cut away from, not toward, your body.
- Keep track of your tools at all times; don't leave them lying around.
- Store tools securely in their proper place when not in use.

POWER TOOLS

- Use a tool only after checking that it has all its parts and that it is in good condition.
- Keep guards in place.
- Be sure cord insulation is intact and undamaged.
- Place 3-prong plugs only in 3-prong outlets.
- Keep cords away from sharp edges and off the floor.
- Don't yank tool cords.
- Carry tools by their handles, not their cords.
- Take your finger off the switch while carrying a plugged-in tool.
- Wear safety glasses.
- Avoid wearing loose clothes, gloves, jewelry, and/or unrestrained long hair.
- Turn a tool off and unplug it before adjusting or fixing it.
- Keep moving parts and sharp edges away from your body while operating tools.
- Store tools properly when they are not in use.
- Be aware cords can become tripping hazards.

GARDEN TOOLS

- Use the same precautions you would use with hand tools.
- Wear sturdy footwear.
- If lying the tool down, be sure sharp edges are down; if leaning it against the wall, be sure that sharp edges are toward the wall.

WORKING OUTDOORS

If your project requires you to work outdoors, remember that there are some specific hazards associated with the great outdoors. Here are some things that you can cover with your team before the project starts.

HEAT

- Be sure that everyone remains hydrated. Drink plenty of fluid before and during the project.
- Refer to the "Working Safely in the Heat" guide.

CREATURES

- Avoid poisonous insects, spiders, and snakes.
- Wear sturdy leather gloves and boots.

- If working in high grass or brush, to reduce the chance of ticks getting to your skin, wear long pants tucked into socks or high boots. Light colored clothing will make them easier to spot.
- Look before reaching into vegetation, woodpiles, or rock.

PLANTS

- Be careful of poisonous plants such as poison oak or poison sumac.
- Be careful of plants with sharp thorns.
- If exposed to poisonous plants, wash the effective area immediately. Seek medical advice as soon as possible.

TOOLS

- Refer to the “Tool Safety” guide.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- Refer to “Choose and Use Personal Protective Equipment” guide.

EXPOSURE

- Be sure to apply sunscreen to exposed skin.
- Even if it is not hot or if it is overcast, sunburn can occur. Be cautious even if it doesn't feel “hot.”
- Wear a hat.

WORKING SAFELY IN THE HEAT

Heat stress can sneak up on people that are working in the heat. This can be working outdoors or indoors. Be aware that many people are not used to the heat. Tolerance to heat is built up over time and some people may think that they can tolerate heat much better than they actually can. Take a few minutes to review the fundamentals with your team.

PRECAUTIONS TO AVOID HEAT STRESS

- Wear light loose clothing.
- Wear a hat outdoors.
- Drink water steadily before and during working in the heat.
- Avoid hot foods and drinks that contain alcohol and caffeine.
- Don't over exert yourself; work at a steady pace.
- Take regular breaks in cool places.

RESPOND TO HEAT STRESS

Heat cramps – Drink water.

Heat exhaustion (weakness; dizziness; sweating; moist, pale, or flushed skin)

- Move to a cool place.
- Loosen clothes and apply cool compresses.
- Drink water slowly.
- Elevate feet 8-12 inches.

Heat stroke (lack of sweating; high body temperature; dry and hot skin; chills; strong rapid pulse; confusion)

- Treat as medical emergency.
- Move to a cool area immediately.
- Use cool water to soak person's clothes and body.
- Fan the body.
- Don't give fluids if the victim is unconscious.

Remember that heat stroke can be deadly and that symptoms demand immediate attention.

COOKING AND FOOD SERVING

If you are preparing and/or serving food for a large group of people, it can be a little different than cooking a family meal. Review some of the hazards with your team.

IT'S HOT

- Be careful of things that are hot. Stoves, ovens, fryers, etc. can all be found in kitchens. Familiarize yourself of the locations of any appliances before your project starts.
- Hot food or water can be extremely dangerous and burn someone quickly if spilled on them. Remember liquids can be heavy and a pot that is holding a large quantity of hot liquid can be heavier than you think. Never leave pot handles sticking out over the floor where they can be hit by people passing by.
- Steam tables can be very dangerous. Be cautious when lifting a pan out of a steam table. Steam that is trapped under a pan will quickly escape through any opening and could burn you.

IT'S SHARP

- When using a knife, don't cut toward you. Pay attention to where the sharp blade is pointing.
- If you drop a knife, stand back and let it fall. Don't try to catch it. (This seems silly, but your instinct will probably be to try and catch it).
- When working with a knife, don't lay it down with the sharp edge pointing up.
- Any kind of broken glass is sharp. If you break a glass, clean it up carefully.

IT CAN BE SLIPPERY

- Busy kitchens can be a mine field of spill and thing that drop on the floor. Always be careful where you step. If you spill something, clean it up.

BE CLEAN

- Always wash your hands before handling food.
- Always wash your hands after handling food, especially raw meat.

Always follow the rules of the kitchen that you are working in. They should have guidelines for handling food, temperature of food, and other safety procedures. Check with your host.