

Wrench Safety

Lumbermens Mutual Casualty Company



There are a lot of ways you can skin your knuckles, but using the wrong wrench for the job ranks as one of the most painful ways. If it has happened to you, or if you know someone it happened to, you know just how painful it is.

There are several important safety rules to follow when using a wrench. Selecting the right wrench for the job is priority one. To choose the right wrench, consider the type of job that has to be done. The location and number of nuts and bolts will determine the type of wrench to use to do the most efficient job. The size of the nut or bolt head will determine the size of the wrench. Do not use a wrench that is too big.

Whether you are using an adjustable wrench or a fixed-jaw wrench, there are general safety points which should be followed. These points apply to both types of tools. First, do not use the wrench as a hammer. Hammering with a wrench is dangerous and may set up a hazardous condition for future use due to undetected damage to the tool.



Never use a damaged wrench. Use only wrenches that are in top condition. If they are worn or defective, take them out of service. Keep a wrench in good condition by keeping it in its proper place on a rack, or in a tool box, when not being used. This will keep it from becoming damaged by other tools or becoming a hazard on the floor. For long-term storage, keep wrenches in a dry place coated with a rust-preventive. When removed from storage, clean it with a solvent.

After choosing the right wrench, get a good solid footing before applying the tool. This will help you keep your balance if the wrench slips or a bolt breaks. Make sure the wrench seats squarely and fits snugly around the nut or bolt. This is necessary when pulling hard on the wrench. Experienced workers develop a "feel" for a wrench. Train yourself to develop this skill.



Adjustable wrenches are not made for hard service, so set the adjusting knurl so the wrench fits the nut snugly. Grip the nut or bolt so that the pulling force is applied to the stationary jaw section. Pulling the wrench is recommended over pushing it.



Statistics show why we should be concerned about safe use of wrenches. Hand tools, such as wrenches, account for about 8 percent of all compensable injuries. The fact that these injuries include such things as loss of eyes, broken bones, and puncture wounds should support the safety points we have been talking about. Remember, use the right wrench for the job and never use a defective tool.



Compliance with OSHA and similar state laws is a client responsibility under the Client Service Agreement. This newsletter is intended to provide general information to assist clients with their safety programs and should not be interpreted as legal advice. OSHA required recordkeeping, illness and injury programs and ergonomic programs are a client responsibility, although Insperty's Safety Services Department can assist clients in their compliance efforts.