

SAFETY: The key supply in all home projects

While the number of "weekend warriors" who choose to perform home improvement projects on their own has grown dramatically over the years, unfortunately, so have the number of injuries.

Spending on home-repair and remodeling materials has grown to an expected \$170 billion this year from about \$105 billion in 1990. While doing that work last year, homeowners sustained more than 300,000 injuries.

"Since do-it-yourself projects have increased so much in the last few years, many more people have begun working with tools for the first time," said Pat Payne, product specialist for American Tool Companies. "What sometimes begins as a dream home improvement project can end up as much more of a nightmare if homeowners aren't fully prepared."

According to recent annual statistics from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 157,000 people were injured in incidents relating to using ladders in their homes. Nearly 100,000 received treatment for hand saw-related and power saw-related injuries. Screwdrivers claimed about 10,000 victims and hammers pounded wounds in more than 42,000 do-it-yourselfers.

Payne says he wants homeowners to use their tools safely when performing home improvement projects. Here are some safety tips:

- Always read the manufacturers' instructions before using any equipment and heed all safety warnings.
- Always wear safety goggles to protect eyes from debris.
- When working around electrical outlets, shut off the electricity. Cleaning or work-

ing around these areas could result in an electrical shock.

- Wear heavy gloves to protect hands when working with sharp objects.
 - Dress appropriately for the project. Long pants, long-sleeved shirts and proper footwear can help reduce injuries from flying debris. Also make sure long hair does not interfere with the work.
 - Increase the ventilation in the workspace to reduce fumes and dust.
 - Wear a mask to reduce inhalation of dust and other particles.
 - Keep tools away from children and pets.
 - Store tools properly and keep them in good, working condition.
 - Use tools only for the purpose they are intended.
- "In addition to using common sense, homeowners should also realize that using the right tool for the right job

is also an extremely important safety issue," Payne said. For example, there are different types of circular saw blades and hand saws for cutting different types of material.

Using the wrong blade can result in potentially serious injuries. The same can be said for drill bits. Improper equipment use could result in kickbacks that can damage the material used in the home improvement project, or even worse, lead to a severe injury.

"Cutting and drilling are serious tasks," Payne said.

"The right equipment and



knowledge is essential in preventing damage to the project, tools and, more importantly, avoiding injuries to the user."

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