Screwdrivers Are Big Drivers of Injuries

Every tool has a purpose, but many workers attempt to find new and unsafe applications for the tools they use. And the common screwdriver just might be the most misused tool in the workplace.

Improper use of a screwdriver can result in a painful injury. Examples of misuse include using the wrong type or size of tip to drive a screw, or using a screwdriver as a chisel or prying tool.

What's at Stake

A common problem involves slippage of the tip within the screw head, or movement of the item being worked on, with the possibility of a hand injury to the worker. Eye injuries from flying particles or electrical shocks while using a screwdriver are other possibilities.

What Can Go Wrong

A worker was using a defective screwdriver for a basic task. Its handle was cracked down one side. As he released the pressure on the tight grip he had been using, the cracked handle pinched and broke his skin. The wound became infected, requiring the employee to take a week off work and pay significant medical bills.

How to Protect Yourself

Here are some tips for the safe use of screwdrivers:

- Always wear safety eyewear when using screwdrivers (or any other hand tools).
- Keep the screwdriver, including the handle, clean and free of grease to reduce the danger of it slipping in your hand.
- Choose the right size and type of screwdriver for the job. The screwdriver must match the head of the screw or it might

slide out of the slot, potentially causing injury to the user.

- Make sure the screwdriver is in good condition before using it. Don’t use one that has a split or broken handle.
- If a screwdriver has a rounded or damaged tip, don’t use it, because it can easily slip.
- Don’t use pliers or a wrench on a screwdriver to exert extra torque on it.
- Store screwdrivers where they will not be damaged, such as in a rack or a shadow board. Keep them away from excessive heat, which may damage the metal or handle.
- Don’t hold the work in one hand while operating the screwdriver with the other. If the screwdriver slips, its tip can injure you. Instead, whenever possible, use a vise to hold the work while you are inserting or removing screws.
- When working in difficult-to-reach spots, use aids such as magnetic or offset screwdrivers.
- Use a drill to make a pilot hole before using a screwdriver to drive in a screw.
- Don’t carry screwdrivers in your pockets, because they can injure you or fall from your pocket and hurt others working below you. Instead, carry screwdrivers and other tools in a belt, tool apron or toolbox.
- Never use a screwdriver for jobs such as opening paint cans, stirring paint, prying objects apart, punching holes, chiseling materials or other such tasks which could damage the tool.
- Never use a screwdriver to check if a battery or electrical circuit is live.
- While insulated screwdrivers reduce your risk for electrical shock when working around electrical hazards, it is safer to shut off the power in the area first.

Final Word

Remember, misuse of a screwdriver can result in a painful injury. Use the right screwdriver for the job, and use it correctly.