

Introduction

Thank you for committing to volunteer with San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity! SGV Habitat is celebrating our 20th year as the local affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International. To date, we have completed 43 homes, providing over 200 people with decent, affordable shelter.

Each volunteer is asked to do his or her part in maintaining a safe work environment, to use protective equipment and to not abuse or misuse materials or equipment. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to bring questions and concerns to the construction manager. Safety is based on knowledge, skill and an attitude of care and concern. A construction site supervisor will instruct each worker about the proper procedures for performing each task. This will familiarize the worker with the potential hazards of doing the tasks and advise him or her as to how such hazards can be minimized or eliminated.

Basic Safety Guidelines

- Before beginning a task, take a moment to think and to be aware of your surroundings
- Do not attempt a task if you are physically unable to do so or if you are uncertain how it is done
- Eliminate distractions so you can concentrate on the task at hand
- Make sure you know where the first-aid kit is located and how to get emergency help
- Immediately notify a site supervisor of any unsafe tool or condition or of an emergency
- Do not enter a trench more than five feet in depth unless another person is present on ground level

Proper Safety Equipment

Clothing is as essential to safety as the selection and use of tools. Wear clothes and gloves that are appropriate for the work and weather conditions. Loose clothing is dangerous around power tools. Construction workers should wear boots or thick-soled shoes at all times. Open-toed shoes or other inappropriate footwear is not permitted on site.

Hard hats are to be worn during the demolition and framing stages of construction or when instructed by site supervisor; these will be made available to workers on each job site at all times.

Protective glasses will be available for every construction worker and must be worn any time he or she is operating a power tool or when instructed by site supervisor.

Dust masks will be available for every construction worker and must be worn when installing insulation, sanding or when instructed by site supervisor.

Ear plugs will be available for every construction worker and must be worn when using a power tool for a prolonged period of time or when instructed by site supervisor.

Electrical Equipment

A power tool should not be used without proper instruction on its use and on what can happen if the tool is used improperly. The instruction should be done by a qualified person and should be given to all workers. The trainee should use the power tool under supervision until the instructor is satisfied that the trainee can use the power tool properly.

Never lower or carry a power tool by its cord. The electrical power cords should be kept off the ground as much as possible. Power tools should be cleaned and inspected daily. Defective tools should not be used and should be immediately reported to a supervisor or labeled and brought to the tool storage unit for repair.

Ensure that the ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) is in place before plugging in electrical power cords. To avoid electrical shock, a three-pronged plug must be used on all electric power tools. Extension cords must not have frayed insulations, be fastened with staples, hung from nails or suspended from wires. All temporary lights must be equipped with non-conductive guards.

Hand Tools

Always select the correct type and size of tool for the task and be sure it is properly adjusted. Do not use any tool that has a loose handle, is dirty, has a dulled edge or is generally in poor condition. Edged tools should be held in both hands with the cutting action away from yourself. Avoid using your hand or fingers as a guide to start a cut.

Tools should be handled with care. Keep edged and pointed tools turned downward. Carry only a few tools at one time unless they are mounted in a special holder or carried in a tool belt. Anyone working with a hammer at height should wear a hammer loop or tool belt; when not in use, the hammer should be kept in the loop or belt. Do not carry sharp tools in your pockets and should be kept in special storage when not in use.

Do not bind the blade of a saw. Wood wedges or shim shingles may be used to spread the saw cut instead. Maintain the blade guard and make sure to repair the guard should it become bent. Never tie the guard back. Ensure proper support before you operate the saw to avoid tilting or falling.

Ladders

Before use, be sure to inspect the ladder for wear and tear, loose rungs or other defects. Move your ladder as you move with the work. An extension ladder should reach three feet above the work level. For every four feet of height, the ladder should be moved one foot away from the wall. A ladder is pitched at a safe angle if you can grasp a rung at shoulder height. Place the ladder on solid footing; if there is need, tie down or barricade the ladder. When the ground is not level, use the claw of a hammer claw to dig under the foot of the ladder.

When climbing, always face the ladder and carry materials in proper carrying devices to keep your hands free. Do not use as a work platform. Never use an aluminum ladder in the vicinity of electrical lines or during inclement weather or windy days.

Scaffolding

All scaffolding elevated ten or more feet must be equipped with safety railing and a toe board. A scaffold must be designed to support four times the weight of the workers and materials resting on it.

Scaffolding should be inspected daily. Never use damaged, rusted or defective equipment. When erecting scaffolding, provide adequate sills for the posts and use base plates. Use the adjusting screws when on uneven grade. Make sure to plumb and level scaffolding; do not force end braces.

Use only properly guarded and inspected lumber for planking. Inspect planking daily for splits and knots; remove defective or damaged planking.

Clean Up

A clean work place is a safe work place. Cleanliness on site contributes to the efficiency of the worker and is important in preventing accidents.

Building materials and supplies should be kept in neat piles to allow aisles and walkways. Clean up rubbish and scrap materials on a daily basis. Keep tools and equipment that are not being used in storage areas. Never leave a work site unguarded unless all tools and materials have been secured.

Toxic Substances

The toxic substances most often found on a work site are asbestos, lead oxides, solvents and animal feces. Special care must be taken when you come in contact with these or other unfamiliar substances. Contact a site supervisor immediately of any asbestos or lead-painted substances. Do not attempt to remove the asbestos. Masks are the best protection against breathing air-borne toxins.

Age Restrictions

No person under the age of 16 is allowed on the construction site — no exceptions. If a volunteer is under the age of 18, he or she must be accompanied by a chaperone on the building site; the ratio of chaperones to 16 year-olds is 1:1 and the ratio of chaperones to 17 year-olds is 1:5

Emergency Medical Care

If someone is injured on the site, immediately notify a site supervisor and summon any needed medical help. Use the supplies located in the first-aid kit to stabilize the injury as much as possible. The site supervisors are trained in first-aid and will help any injured worker. Insurance forms with the necessary emergency medical care information are located in every first-aid kit.