

Tech Tips: Tool Safety.

Using the right tool for the right job sounds simple enough, but too often this advice is ignored, resulting in damaged tools, a botched job and even personal injury. I have found that maintaining a safe, well-lighted working area, and choosing to get the right tools actually saves me time and money in the long run.

Here's a quick review of some of the basics:

- Wear eye, ear, and hand protection—the reasons are obvious
- Keep your work area clean and uncluttered—look like the pro you are.
- Make sure cutting tools are sharp—a dull tool is more dangerous to use
- Don't wear jewelry or loose clothing if you are welding or using rotating power equipment
- Be sure outlets and power tools are properly grounded against electrical shock
- Stay focused—it's better to stop and deal with a distraction than work through it
- Clean up spills to avoid slipping—toss oily rags and trash in the right containers
- Carry tools safely—never put sharp, pointed or cutting tools in your pockets

There are automotive tools and equipment manufactured by companies like SPX-OTC that have specific uses. It's best to read the owners' manuals even for tools and equipment you think are obvious to use, like floor jacks, pullers, hub removers, clamps, and other specialty tools. In short, know the tools you use!

There are also safety issues associated with electronic diagnostics tools. Today, many Techs use scan tools, laptops or PC's to do diagnostics—having these devices located at the vehicle is essential to working efficiently. Think of the vehicle as your active “workbench” and be aware of the hazards of getting cords tangled in a running engine, or reaching across hot motor parts to get a reading.

The bottom line is to rely on more than common sense. Stay focused on the job, be informed about the tools you use, and don't take workplace and personal safety for granted. It makes a difference. Any walk-through of a multi-bay shop will quickly indicate which Techs are the true pros by how they care for their tools, their workspace and, most importantly, for their personal safety.

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[Pick someone at OTC to be listed for the byline.]