CONSTRUCTIVE Ideas

Innovative Ideas to Reduce Soft Tissue Injuries in the Construction Industry

Suspending tools prevent back, arm, and shoulder fatigue

When you're drilling sideways into a wall or above your head, while holding a heavy tool like a 20 kg (50 lb.) drill, your arms, shoulders, and back get very tired. The weight of the tool can increase the risk of injury. Here are some other factors that can also increase risk of injury:

- Excessive effort needed to support the tool in one place – the muscles have to work hard to hold the same position
- Awkward positions – getting the tool into the proper drilling angle may require working with your arms and hands at or above shoulder level
- Vibration – muscles have to work harder when gripping tools that vibrate

One solution to reducing your risk of injury is to suspend the tool. Some major construction firms use nylon-reinforced safety slings suspended from an I-beam or rebar to carry the weight of the air tools. The workers can easily manoeuvre the drill or jackhammer without having to bear the weight.

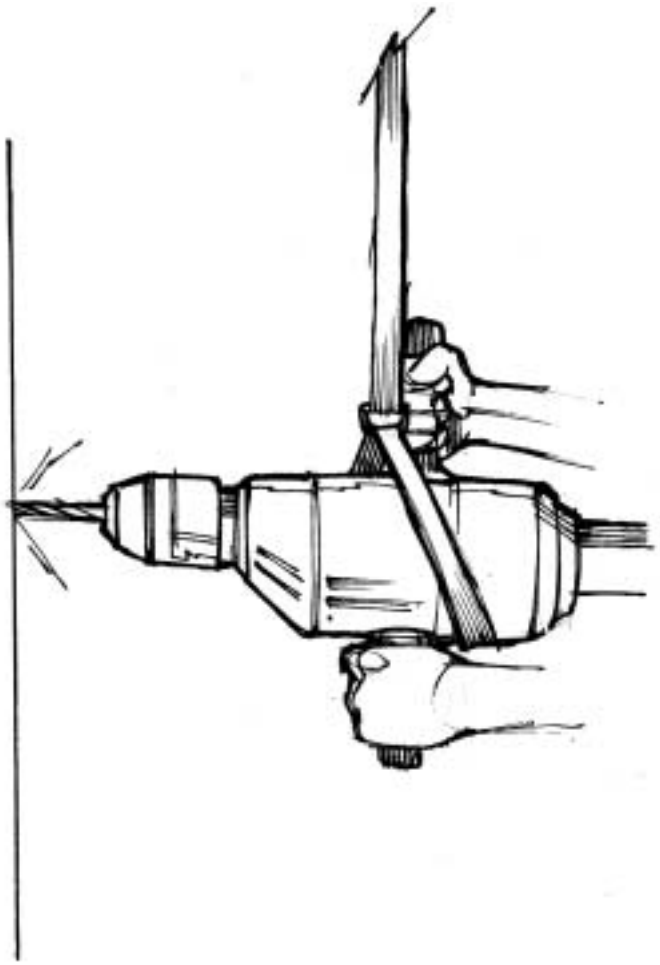
Tips for suspending tools

- Keep the rope or strap short enough so it doesn't create a tripping hazard.
- If the height of the tool needs to be changed, use the rope or strap as a friction pulley to adjust the position up, down, or sideways.

A safety sling is not appropriate for all drilling or chipping jobs. While it works well for suspending heavy air tools, a safety sling is difficult to use in a cramped space.

Benefits of hanging your tools

- If the drill bit binds, the safety sling helps to reduce effect of the kickback
- Efforts can be used to drill or chip, rather than carry the weight of the tool.
- The stress on the shoulders and back, caused by supporting the equipment, is reduced when using the safety sling.



WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

For more information contact the WCB Prevention Division at 1 888 621-7233 or 604 276-3100