

ReStore safety for volunteers



At Habitat for Humanity, we work with our volunteers and staff members to ensure that each ReStore is a safe working environment.

Your team leader is a Habitat Competent Person and has experience reducing hazards, but you as a volunteer also can take measures to ensure your safety and the safety of your team.

The RV Care-A-Vanner safety corner provides these tips, which adhere to Occupational Safety and Health Administration guidelines and Habitat best practices, so you can help keep each Habitat ReStore a safe place to work!

Attitude for safety

Safety begins with a safe attitude. Please keep the following in mind when working in the ReStore.

- Think before you begin a task. Don't rush.
- Ask a ReStore staff person if you are unsure how to use a tool or perform a task.
- Avoid distractions. Concentrate on the task.
- Inspect all power tools, hand tools, and ladders before use.
- Know where the emergency action plan, first-aid kit and fire extinguisher are located.
- Immediately advise a ReStore staff person of any unsafe or hazardous tools or conditions.

Dressing for work

Dressing in a way that is practical and safe for working in the warehouse is important, and loose or inappropriate clothing can be dangerous. Follow these basic guidelines:

- Wear clothes and gloves that fit and are appropriate for the work and weather conditions.
- Wear work or hiking boots, sturdy shoes, or sneakers that protect from falling objects. Thick, non-slip soles are safest. Any volunteer wearing sandals or other inappropriate footwear will not be permitted to remain on site.

Personal protective equipment

Habitat best practice is to wear:

- Gloves for most activities and safety glasses when needed.
- Respiratory protection when inhalation hazards are present.

Personal precautions

Though you may be enthusiastic to contribute, be sure to volunteer for the tasks you feel you can safely accomplish.

- **Lifting:** Do not lift beyond your safe lifting ability. Always use the proper lifting technique: bend your legs and keep your back vertical and straight. Ask for help.
- **Overexertion:** Recognize your limits. Avoid struggling to keep up with other team members. When you get tired, take a break. Sit down and rest frequently. Habitat building is not a competitive event.
- **Hydration:** Physical work causes you to perspire, resulting in dehydration. Be sure to replenish your lost liquids. Both ReStores will have drinking water available.

Hand tools

- Always select the correct type and size of tool for the task, and make sure it is sharp or properly adjusted.
- Do not use a tool if the handle is loose, broken or in poor condition.
- Handle and carry tools with care. Keep sharp-edged and pointed tools turned downward.
- Retract the blade of a razor knife when not in use.
- Never place tools on a sloping overhead surface; on top of a ladder; or in a precarious position where it could fall.
- Never carry sharp tools in your pockets.
- When not in use, tools should be returned to their place of keeping — special boxes, chests or cabinets.

Using ladders

- Inspect a ladder before you use it. Look for loose rungs and defects. If the ladder is unsafe, don't use it. Habitat job sites should have commercial-grade ladders. Household, light-duty-rated ladders or old ladders with no rating should not be used. They are not designed to take the load and usage of a commercial site and can collapse, twist or bend, causing a fall.
- Use a ladder that will reach the work area. An extension ladder should extend 3 feet above the upper level and must be secured against sideways or backwards movement.
- If your belt buckle is extended outside the ladder while you are working, you are overreaching.
- Place the ladder on solid footing in a safe location. With a stepladder, be sure that all four legs are on the ground and the ladder is fully opened and locked. Never stand on the top step or the top of a step ladder.
- Always climb a ladder using three points of contact, such as two feet and one hand or two hands and one foot. When climbing, always face the ladder and keep your hands free for climbing. Carry tools and materials in proper carrying devices. Don't be afraid to ask someone to hold your ladder.

Maintaining a safe, clean and secure ReStore

- Position building materials and supplies in an order that allows adequate aisles and walkways.
- Clean up rubbish and scrap materials as you go, at least twice each day. Do not permit blocks of wood, nails, bolts, empty cans, pipe, wire or other materials to accumulate around the job site where they interfere with the work and constitute a safety and fire hazard.
- Sweep out the store work areas as needed.
- Remove nails from discarded boards or, at a minimum, bend them over.
- Keep tools and equipment that are not in use in their proper place. This protects both the tools and workers.
- The store work area should be cleaned and the tools put away before ending the workday.

Emergency medical care

The local Habitat will discuss emergency procedures with you during the team orientation. If a person is injured on the job, contact your team leader and the Habitat Competent person immediately. They will direct a person to summon medical help, if needed, and obtain the ReStore's first-aid kit.



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