SAFE Project Tool Use

The safety of our Scouts, volunteers, employees, and communities is our top priority. This document outlines several minimum guiding protocols that adult leaders and other volunteers must consider for Scouting service projects that include the use of tools. It is not intended to cover the use of tools integrated into advancement requirements (i.e., merit badges, handbooks, or adventures).

If it is not practical to meet these protocols, do not conduct the activity or service project.

S = Supervision

Qualified adult supervision is on site. They must have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate or supervise the operation of all tools and equipment used for an activity or service project.

A = Assessment

Check the area of the project for any hazards, and clear workspace for tool use between participants.

An assessment by qualified supervisors determines what personal protective equipment (PPE) is required. Examples of PPE include:

- Work gloves
- Safety glasses or face shield
- Safety helmets/hardhats
- Earplugs or muffs
- Steel-toe shoes or sturdy work boots
- Protective aprons or clothing
- Fall protection
- Recommendations of tool manufacturer

F = Fitness and Skills:

Participation in projects and the use of tools should be based on the mental, physical, emotional, and social maturity of youth and adult members.

Lions and Tigers cannot use tools during service projects.

E = Equipment and Environment

Leaders must follow the most restrictive and protective guidelines. **The table on page 2 is not comprehensive; tool or equipment manufacturers' safety literature about age and skills restrictions will supersede the recommendations**. If in doubt, properly trained and/or experienced adults should be recruited for all tool use or job functions that might be hazardous or dangerous.

All work at any elevation 4 feet or higher is prohibited for any youth. The first three steps of a step stool or ladder may be appropriate for older Scouts BSA, Venturing, or Sea Scouts.

Work below grade that includes trenching or excavations (2 feet deep or more) is not appropriate for projects. Below-grade work such as shallow foundations, post holes, or trail work is appropriate if using hand tools for youth — no powered tools — provided all underground utilities are clear of the area.

Resources

SAFE: scouting.org/health-and-safety/safe

SAFE Service Project Planning Checklist: filestore.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/680-027.pdf

Prohibited Activities (See numbers 16 & 17): scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss07/#b

Ladder Safety Moment: scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/ladder-safety/

Portable Hand and Power Tools Checklist (NIOSH): cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2004-101/chklists/r1n50p~1.htm

AGE APPROPRIATE GUIDELINES: PROJECT TOOL USE	Lions / Tigers with Adult Partner	Wolf / Bear	Webelos / Arrow of Light	Scouts BSA	Older Scouts BSA* Sea Scouts Venturers
Yard Tools					
Rakes, hoes, shovels, small clippers, handheld (gardening) shovels, trowels		√	√	√	√
Pickaxes, mattocks, post-hole diggers, carts, dollies, wheelbarrows				√	√
Lawn mowers, line trimmers, edgers, hedge trimmers					√
Riding mowers, tractors, or other equipment					Adult Use Only
Chain saws (21+ years old with proper training**), log splitters, woodchippers					Adult Use Only
Wood- and Metal-Working Tools					
Hammers, screwdrivers, wood sanding blocks	√	√	√	√	√
Pocket or wood-carving knives***		Bear only	√	√	√
Handsaws, wood chisels, wood planes, brace and bits				√	√
Small, handheld electric screwdrivers and palm sanders				√	√
Belt or large sanders (electric or cordless)					√
Welder****; circular, reciprocating, or radial saws; band or scroll saws; routers and planers; metal grinders; pressure washers; drill presses; branding irons					Adult Use Only
Painting					
Handheld paint brushes	√	√	√	√	√
Paint rollers			√	√	√
Paint rollers with extensions				√	√
Paint sprayers					√
Elevated Work					
Ladders or step stools (limited to the first 3 steps only)					√
Ladders or scaffold (4 feet or higher requires fall protection)					Adult Use Only

** older Scouts BSA members are age 13 and have completed eighth grade or are 14 years old and up*

*** chain-saw training must meet (a) a state or federally recognized chain saw training course approved by the council; or (b) the BSA Chain Saw Basic Training course, No. 430-136*

**** requires the youth to have earned the Whittling Adventure or Totin' Chip*

***** Welding merit badge participation is exempt*

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