



Tools and Equipment

Tools and equipment help you to make the work happen. You cut, lift, move, sort, or reach stuff within your space because you have devices that help. You stay safe and healthy because you have equipment that protects you and others from injury. This resource is designed to help you keep the people delivering your mission safe from tool- or equipment-related injury.

Through this module, you will learn how to:

- Check that the tool or piece of equipment you are using is ready for use.
- Use the tool or equipment in a safe manner.
- Store the tool or equipment in a safe manner, one designed to keep it use-ready.
- Train others on how to use the tool or equipment.



**Washington
Food Coalition**

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"Tools and Equipment" was written by Nancy Bacon and Margaret Meps Schulte.



Overview

There are 5 main topics for you to know about tool and equipment safety:

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This course is accompanied by a series of **short videos**, also available from nonprofitsafetyhero.com.



We recommend that you print this document and have a pen or pencil handy. We've provided exercises where you can reflect on your situation and make plans. The first one is below.

REFLECTION

Before we start, let's find out what you already know about using tools and equipment safely. Write down your answers to these questions.



Name two tools or pieces of equipment that you use regularly.



What could happen if the tool or equipment were used incorrectly?



What strategies can you use to ensure that the tool or equipment is used safely?

1. Safety Mindset

Everyone has experiences with tools. We use tools in almost every aspect of life—they help us to achieve some goal, whether that means opening a can, reaching the gutters, or transporting heavy moving boxes. We know the power of tools and equipment as positive contributors to our lives. We also know that the improper use of tools and equipment can cause accidents and harm. Our goal in this guide is to help you develop a safety mindset, so you benefit from the positive role that tools and equipment play while eliminating the potential harm they introduce.



Think about a tool or piece of equipment that has **positively** impacted your ability to do something. What contributes to its benefit?

Think about a tool or piece of equipment that has **negatively** impacted a situation. What caused the negative impact? What happened?

Safety Mindset Principles

When you have a safety mindset, you benefit from how tools and equipment make the work easier. You hopefully avoid the harm that could come from (1) not using a tool, (2) using the wrong tool, (3) using a tool in bad condition, or (4) using a tool in good condition the wrong way.

A safety mindset related to tools and equipment has three main principles:

1. How tools and equipment are used impacts your safety and the safety of others around you. How you use tools can cause harm to you or others. How people around you use tools can cause harm to you or others, as well as damage products, equipment and infrastructure. *Everyone has a role to play in a safety tool environment.*

Ask yourself:

- Am I demonstrating a commitment to safety in the ways I use, store, and transport this tool?
- Am I helping others to demonstrate a commitment to safety in the ways I use, store, and transport this tool?
- Am I contributing to a safety-centered culture within the organization?

2. Tools and equipment are used to (1) increase productivity and (2) increase safety. Use the **right tool or equipment** for the situation to achieve these goals.

Ask yourself:

- **If you *are not* using a tool:** Would a tool make this job easier or safer? Consider how you open boxes and pinch your hands to pull at box flaps, or how you carry heavy loads. A tool or piece of equipment may make the job safer.
- **If you *are* using a tool:** Is this the right tool for the job? Could I break the tool or cause harm to myself or others by using this tool? Do I know how to use this tool?

3. Our role with tools and equipment happens in four stages: care, use, storage, and transport. Everyone should participate in all four stages to ensure that everyone stays safe. *Later in this guide, we provide specific instructions in what to do in each of these four stages.*

Ask yourself:

- How do I check that a tool or piece of equipment is in **good condition** before I begin using it? How do I make sure that I am using it in the way that it was intended?
- What guidelines do I follow in how I **use** a tool?
- How do I **store** a tool or piece of equipment when I am finished using it? How do I make sure it is in good condition for the next person? How do I make sure it doesn't cause harm while being stored?
- How do I **transport** a tool or piece of equipment safely?



We just shared three safety principles related to tools and equipment. As a way to review them, write a list of rules that you commit to following to support a tool-safe space.

Safety Flowchart

You face a range of decisions when it comes to how you use tools and equipment. Some of these questions are contained in the safety flowchart:



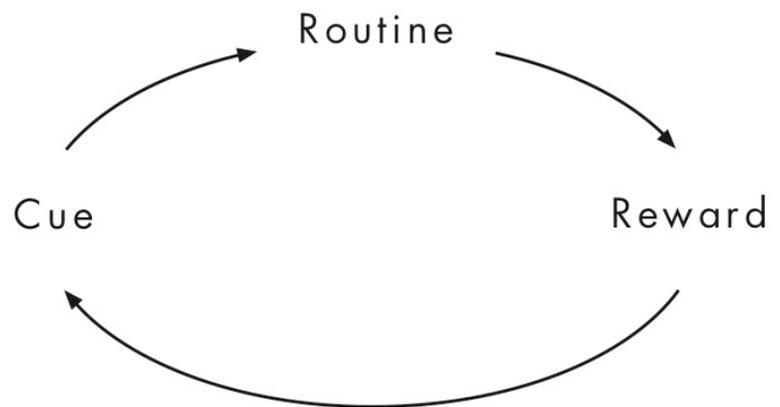
REFLECTION

Apply the flowchart to a specific activity or tool. Work through the flowchart to practice the questions that you will ask yourself. Add any information that customizes the flowchart to your organization.

Safety Habits

A habit is a regular tendency or practice, often done without conscious awareness. According to research, habits happen in loops: a **cue** tells you to follow a **routine**, which gives you a **reward** (or positive feedback that tells you the loop is worth repeating).

Here's an example of a habit loop related to a tool:



You are unpacking pallets and need to open a well-sealed box of food (cue). You grab your box cutter, open the blade and open the box (routine). You then put the box cutter down (blade open) on a box to the side, knowing that you will have another box needing to be opened soon. You move to the next box and open it (reward... you saved time because the blade was already out and open).

But what actually happens is that your colleague passes by and leans on that box to talk with you. She slices open the palm of her hand on your open blade. That's not the reward you were hoping for!

A word of caution: Always be attentive and alert when working with tools and equipment – routine can lead to complacency, which has resulted in many injuries and accidents

Habit Strategies

- Chose a specific tool, equipment, or situation to think about. What is it?
- Write down what your habit is now.
- Write down what your habit should be to maintain a safe work environment.
- Focus on the reward. What can you do to reward the right behavior? It is in the reward that you will redefine a habit.
- Do this again for another tool, equipment, or situation.



How do the habits within your organization reinforce your culture?

How do new people develop new habits?

What can you do to ensure everyone in your organization has good habits related to safety and health?

Working together safely: communication tips for teams and pairs

You may have the training, PPE, and habits to use a tool or piece of equipment safely, but what happens when you work on a task with someone else? **A failure to communicate when using tools and equipment can lead to accident or injury.** Speak clearly, and don't ever expect or attempt mind-reading.

Before you begin, ask these questions:

- Does everyone on this team know how to use the tools and equipment involved? Consider offering or asking for refresher training for everyone, to teach both new users and folks whose skills may be rusty.
- Does everyone have the correct PPE for this task? You may need to reassign roles based on PPE: "Jo, you have a hard hat, so you do the next step."
- Have you gone over hand signals and how to communicate starting and stopping? Standard industry signals have been developed for equipment like forklifts, and you can find videos and visual guides for hand signals online.
- How do you need to change your working style in a group? Do you need to work more slowly and methodically to keep everyone safe?

For example, you should check to make sure everyone's out of the way of danger by calling "All clear?" But **wait for an answer from everyone** before you proceed — and be aware that this might take a little time.

Using This Guide

You have now thought about your safety mindset. You know that effective use of tools and equipment starts before the task begins, when you learn how to use the tool and ensure that it is in good working condition. You know that you need to store and transport it properly when you are done with it to avoid injury or impacts to its working condition. You know that you need the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to protect your eyes, hands, and feet.



Take a moment to do an inventory of the tools, non-motorized equipment, and powered equipment in your facility.

Hand tools	Non-motorized equipment	Powered equipment
<input type="checkbox"/> Utility knife/box cutter <input type="checkbox"/> Tape gun <input type="checkbox"/> Box stapler <input type="checkbox"/> <i>What else?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hand truck <input type="checkbox"/> Pallet jack (manual) <input type="checkbox"/> Cart (shopping and flat) <input type="checkbox"/> Ladder <input type="checkbox"/> <i>What else?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Electric pallet jacks <input type="checkbox"/> Forklifts <input type="checkbox"/> Order pickers <i>You must have a certificate to use these.</i>
		<input type="checkbox"/> Fleet vehicles <input type="checkbox"/> Walk-in coolers/freezers <input type="checkbox"/> <i>What else?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

What questions do you have about how to use these tools or equipment?

Through the rest of the guide, we are going to provide information specific to commonly-used tools and pieces of equipment within food banks or food distribution centers. You will learn about four key stages of tool and equipment use:

1. Care
2. Get ready to use
3. Use
4. Store (and transport)

2. Personal Protective Equipment

The COVID pandemic made the term Personal Protective Equipment, or PPE, a regular part of our vocabulary. When it comes to tools and equipment, PPE includes the following:

- Gloves
- Closed-toe shoes
- Hard-toe boots (when operating heavy equipment)
- High visibility vests
- Rubber-soled boots (for environments that might get wet)
- Safety goggles
- Hard hats
- Warm hats (for walk-in coolers and freezers)
- Jackets or long sleeves
- Knee pads

For safe food handling, the list includes:

- Masks
- Gloves
- Hair nets

Care

- Make sure the PPE is in good condition. This includes checking for rips or tears.
- Ensure PPE is clean and free of contamination.

Get Ready to Use

- Make sure you are wearing the right PPE for the job.

Use

- Use PPE the way the manufacturer intended.

Store

- Make sure the PPE is stored in an appropriate and convenient location, available to you when and where you need it.
- Dispose of items properly after using any non-durable or one-time wear PPE, such as food safety gloves or masks.

3. Hand Tools

Hand tools are exactly that—tools that you hold in your hand. They are often small enough to fit in your pocket or on a pouch on your belt. Over the next few pages, we will focus on three common hand tools:

- Utility knife/box cutter
- Tape gun
- Box stapler

Utility Knife/Box Cutter

A common tool used in warehouses and storage spaces related to food distribution is the utility knife or box cutter. It typically has a razor-sharp blade that either retracts or folds into a sheath. It is used to cut open boxes and remove durable packaging.

Care

- The blade should be sharp. (Dull knives require you to apply more pressure, which increases the potential for injury).
- Interchangeable blades should be correctly shaped and sized for the handle.
- The tool should have a provision for the blade to be covered, either by retracting or folding.
- The tool should be clean and free from rust or corrosion.

Get Ready to Use

- Inspect the tool to ensure it is in proper working order with no loose screws, and that the blade fully extends and retracts. It should be clean.
- Wear cut-resistant gloves to protect hands from the blade and cardboard cuts.

Use

- Draw the knife away from your body.
- Do not apply too much pressure. Remember, you want to follow good ergonomic principles—avoid pinching or gripping for too long in one work session.
- Retract or cover the blade any time you set the tool down.
- Do not hold the tool in your hand when moving cases of food boxes.
- Do not hold the tool in your hand when doing a task that requires both hands, like typing.
- Don't use box cutters or utility knives to pry loose objects.

Store

- Whenever transporting the tool, always have the blade covered or retracted.
- When storing the tool, make sure the blade is covered.

Tape Gun

A tape gun is used to seal cardboard boxes so that they are secure for storage or shipment. These tools can be dangerous because they have a sharp cutting blade that is used to cut the tape.

Care

- The tape gun should be clean and the blade sharp.

Get Ready to Use

- If not already loaded, load a new roll of tape by holding the tape roll in your right hand with the end of the tape on the left and the sticky side facing down. With your left hand, pick up the tape gun and push the tape roll onto the large roller. Push the tape roll all the way in. Lift the guard level and thread the end of the tape roll through the smaller roller. Pull the tape up toward the blades, release the lever, and pull the tape through so that the blade cuts off the end.
- Make sure you are using the right tape. If the tape roll doesn't fit snugly, you are using the wrong type of tape roll.

Use

- Reach forward without straining your back.
- Pull the tape gun towards you.
- Be aware of how much you are gripping the tool or straining your wrist. Take regular breaks as necessary.

Store

- Tape guns should be kept off the floor and tucked away from where someone might accidentally hit the blade.
- Tape guns should be stored in a clean condition.

Box Stapler

A box stapler is a tool used to seal a cardboard box.

Care

- The box stapler should be clean. Use oil as appropriate.

Get Ready to Use

- Load the box stapler with staples. This is done much like a desk stapler—open the cartridge and slide the staples inside.
- Avoid putting your hand near the stapling function or pointing the stapler at people.

Use

- Push the trigger (or pull, depending on the model) to staple two flaps of a box.

Store

- Box staplers are normally mounted on the floor or attached to a table. Make sure yours is out of the way, to minimize accidents.



If you use OTHER hand tools, complete these four sections for them:

Care

Get Ready to Use

Use

Store and Transport

4. Non-Motorized Equipment

We use a range of non-motorized equipment to reach high places or move heavy loads. This type of equipment is bigger than a hand tool, introducing storage and transportation challenges.

- Hand truck
- Pallet jack (manual)
- Cart (Shopping and flat)
- Ladder

Hand Truck

A hand truck, also known as a trolley or dolly, is a piece of equipment used to move boxes and heavy items. It has an L-shaped profile with handles at one end, wheels at the base, and a small ledge to set objects on. Although the hand truck is the simplest piece of equipment listed, it still involves care and safe use.

Care

- Check the wheels, frame, and lubrication.

Get Ready to Use

- Check that the truck can handle the load's weight and size
- Check your route and remove any obstructions
- Personal protective equipment:
 - Wear sturdy shoes with nonskid soles
 - Wear gloves that give you a good grip
 - Avoid loose or baggy clothes that could trip you or get caught in the truck wheels
- Use proper lifting techniques (bending knees and keeping back straight)
- Place heavy items at the bottom
- Position the load over the axles so the truck, not handles, carry the weight
- Stack the load so you can see over it

Watch out!

If you drop a heavy item on the hand truck platform, it can cause the back to spring forward. Place boxes carefully, especially when two people are loading, to avoid unexpected blows to your body or your head.

Use

- Grip the handles firmly
- Lean the load back so that the wheels are supporting the load. Do not lean the load over too far, so you don't strain your back or shoulders. The wheels should carry all the weight while moving the load.
- Walk backwards if necessary to maneuver into a tight place
- Don't brace or brake the truck with your foot

Store

- Store away from walkways so people don't trip on the ledge or cause the hand truck to fall over.

Cart (Shopping and Flat)

Many food pantries and food banks use shopping carts and flat carts to move cases of food in their locations.

Care

- Check the wheels, frame, and lubrication

Get Ready to Use

- Check that the cart can handle the load's weight and size
- Check your route and remove any obstructions
- Use proper lifting techniques (bending knees and keeping back straight)
- Place heavy items at the bottom
- Jammed shopping carts can cause severe hand injuries. Use caution; don't be in a hurry when you separate them, and make sure someone else's hand is not in a risky place.
- Center the load to avoid flipping or an imbalanced load
- Stack the load so you can see over it

Use

- Grip the handles firmly
- Walk backwards if necessary to maneuver into a tight place
- Don't brace or brake the truck with your foot

Storage

- Flat carts can be low to the ground and become tripping hazards if not stored properly when not in use.

Why push, not pull?

Pulling may be easier for maneuverability, but it puts considerable strain on the back. Pulling can cause back trauma or should strain, even dislocation. Pushing uses stronger leg muscles and keeps the back straight.

Pallet-Stacking (Empty Pallets)

- Never stack mixed sizes of pallets
- Never stack pallets on their sides
- Use pallet-stacking frames or stacking racks to stabilize the load
- Don't reuse damaged pallets
- Keep stacks at a safe height (there is no specified height, but pallets must be at least 18 inches below the sprinkler system)

Source: <https://na.bhs1.com/stacking-pallets-osa-regulations>

Pallet Jack (Manual)

A pallet jack helps move heavy loads.

Care

- Make sure the pallet jack is in good condition. Check the wheels, the forks, and the hydraulic pump. You may need to oil the hydraulic jack. (If you see hydraulic fluid under the pallet jack, it is an indication of a broken seal. Do not use and have the pallet jack serviced.)

Get Ready to Use

- Check the capacity and make sure you don't exceed it
- Only use a pallet jack in good condition
- Use proper lifting techniques when loading/unloading and operating the pallet jack
- Evenly distribute the load on a pallet before moving it. Do not stack items directly on the forks.
- Keep loads as close to the ground as possible for transport.
- Ensure no leakage from the previous or current load has weakened the structure of the pallet
- Personal Protective Equipment
 - Always wear gloves when handling pallets
 - Hard-toe boots are recommended
- Plan your journey:
 - Check that the route you are taking is clear and free from hazards and uneven surfaces, before you begin to move your load
 - If you are carrying a large load that obstructs your view, ask a co-worker to guide you
 - Stick to correct sides of the warehouse

Use

- Always push the load unless going down an incline. Never pull it.
- Avoid going down an incline with a loaded hand pallet jack, because gravity and the weight of the load could cause you to lose control.
- Be wary of pinch points to avoid hand injuries
- Keep your feet away from the pallet jack wheel to ensure it does not roll on you.
- Never place your feet under a pallet or pallet jack
- Move the load slowly to ensure safety in case your surroundings or situation change
- Watch for clearance on both sides of and above the load
- Start, move, and stop slowly enough that you can keep the load under control
- Do not ride on the forks of a pallet jack or allow others to be carried
- Don't stand on a pallet jack
- Don't try to stop a pallet jack if it gets out of control
- Seek assistance when moving heavy loads to prevent straining

Store

- Store pallets in a dry place
- Always store the pallet jack with the forks lowered to the floor. Do not store a loaded pallet with lifted forks.

Ladder

A ladder may be used to reach high places inside or outside your facility. Improper use of ladders is a leading cause of physical injury.

Care

- Ensure that the ladder is in good condition (joints are tight, steps and side rails are not bent, moveable parts operate freely, and safety feet not excessively worn)

Get Ready to Use

- Choose the right ladder for the job
- Make sure the surface is stable
- Never use an aluminum ladder within 10 feet of electrical equipment
- Follow the load capacity recommendation from manufacturer. For example, a light ladder has a maximum intended load of 200 pounds, which includes you and whatever you are carrying up the ladder.

Use

- Look where you intend to use the ladder to ensure that it will not contact wires or be situated under overhead obstructions.
- Do not stand on the last step or bucket shelf
- When using an extension ladder:
 - Ensure that the ladder extends at least three feet beyond the supporting object when used to access an upper level, such as a roof.
 - Place the ladder at an angle so that the base of ladder is one foot away from the wall for every four feet of height.
 - Secure the ladder, if possible, so that it will not be knocked over. This is important when you set up a ladder, intending to use it for a length of time at one location.
 - When possible, have a safety spotter present when going up and down the ladder
- Make sure the ladder is equipped with nonskid safety feet

Store

- Hang ladders on a wall hook to ensure they don't get pushed or knocked over
- If a ladder must be stored against a wall, make sure it is at a 75 degree angle to ensure stability
- Keep ladders accessible; they don't work if you don't use them

Transport

- Carry ladders properly: Place one arm through the ladder and carry it on your shoulder. Carry ladders in a horizontal position with the top of ladder facing forward.
- Use several people to move longer/heavier ladders with one person stationed at each end.
- Carry only one ladder at a time.

5. Powered Equipment

By "powered equipment," we mean both motorized equipment and stationary equipment that runs on electricity or gas. To keep workers safe, equipment in these categories is often regulated by state and federal agencies.

Know the Law

- Youth under 16 years of age may not work inside a walk-in cooler or freezer.
- You must be at least 18 years of age to operate motorized equipment.
- Motorized equipment usually requires a certificate to operate.

If you don't have a certificate, it is not safe for you to operate electric pallet jacks, forklifts, order pickers, or other similar motorized equipment.

Motorized Equipment

Everyone working in a space where there is motorized equipment plays a role in keeping themselves and others safe.

Rules for everyone to follow with motorized equipment:

- Never walk in the path of a motorized piece of equipment if it is moving.
- Make eye contact with the equipment operator, so that the operator knows where you are and does not hit you with the machine or load.
- Keep distance between yourself and the pallet. That way, if the pallet load or machine tips over, items won't fall on you, and you will not be crushed.
- If you are spotting for the machine operator, have clear hand signals that you both understand.



Name the powered equipment in the building where you are working:

List the rules that you will follow to keep yourself and others safe. (See above if you need a reminder).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Keep reading to learn about safety issues related to two kinds of powered equipment commonly used in food banks and food warehouses:

- Fleet vehicles
- Walk-in coolers/freezers

Fleet Vehicles

You may have vehicles owned by your organization to deliver food or transport people. Ensure all drivers have the proper state license and are covered by your vehicle insurance prior to operating the vehicle.

Care

Follow all practices related to upkeep and maintenance of any vehicle.

All commercial vehicles are required to have an annual safety inspection.

Get Ready to Use

- Create a Vehicle Safety Plan. This might include:
 - Alcohol and Drug Use Policy
 - Seat Belt Use Policy
 - Distracted Driving Policy
 - Defensive Driving Policy
 - Traffic Safety Policy (avoiding fatigue, etc.)
 - Vehicle Maintenance Plan
 - Policy for Reporting Moving Violations
- Check the driving records of any team members who might drive fleet vehicles
- Provide driver training as needed for fleet vehicles

Use

Fleet vehicles should be used as they were intended to be used.

Store

Fleet vehicles should be stored in a site that is well lit, safe to access, and clear of oncoming traffic or other potential harm.

Walk-In Coolers & Freezers

Your walk-in coolers and freezers are vital to your mission. They are also pieces of equipment that can cause harm if you don't take key precautions.

- **Youth under 16 are prohibited from working inside a cooler/freezer.**
- **Access to coolers/freezers should be limited to authorized, trained team members.**

Care

Follow manufacturer's instructions.

- Make sure the interior safety door latch is in working order
- Keep the equipment dry
- Keep the equipment clean
- Remove ice build-up
- Don't overload shelves
- Keep walkways clear
- Post "No Entry" signs to keep untrained team members out

Get Ready to Use

- Identify where the safety door latch is located
- Wear PPE to stay warm and avoid slips and falls:
 - Jackets
 - Hats
 - Gloves
 - Rubber-soled shoes
- Create a buddy system
- Provide stepstools for hard-to-reach items. Remind workers not to use boxes, milk crates, or other inappropriate items as makeshift stepstools.
- Use anti-slip floor pads when possible

Use

- Use a temperature log to note current temperatures
- Check safety releases on doors
- Follow a buddy system if someone is working inside a cooler or freezer
- Use stepstools for hard-to-reach items. Don't use boxes, milk crates, or makeshift stools to reach items.
- Bring a cell phone with you in case of emergency
- Take regular breaks to warm up
- Check the cooler/freezers at the end of each day to make sure no one is inside

What to Cover in Walk-In Cooler/Freezer Training

- Demonstrate the use of the safety door latch
- Have each person practice using the safety door latch
- Explain the buddy system, how to communicate that a team member is going into the cooler/freezer, and how often the buddy should check on the person in the walk-in
- Practice buddy system communication
- Show where the stepstool or ladder is stored for the walk-in