MCC/SWAP Orientation Packet

SWAP Safety in the Workplace

It is important that groups make every effort to maintain personal and group safety at the worksite. Every worksite has its hazards, seen and unseen and so it’s important that the following guidelines be understood and followed in order to reduce risk of injury and increase enjoyment of your work experience.

Sleeping and Eating:
- Be sure to be in bed at "lights out" and to eat well. Without enough sleep and nutritious food, the volunteer's alertness and physical wellbeing can suffer, setting up a potentially unsafe work condition.

Safe Clothing:
- Shoes--hard soled or work boots for ground work. Tennis shoes for roofing. Shoes MUST be worn at all times at the worksite.
- Shirts--100% cotton tends to be coolest; avoid polyester. Wear long sleeves if working with insulation. Always wear a shirt when working to protect against sunburn and insects.
- Long pants are preferred at worksites, but knee length shorts are allowed.
- Use work gloves to protect your hands and safety glasses for eye protection.

Power Tools (for volunteers 18 years old and older):
- Use power tools only where there are no explosive or flammable materials.
- Keep the worksite free from debris as this lessens fire hazards and heightens personal safety.
- Inspect all extension cords for damage or exposed wires. Never use any cord in bad condition. Never overload splitters/adapters that allow for several items to be powered at the same time. These can be dangerous fire hazards and may overheat and blow circuits in the home.
- Do not use an adapter plug to connect a 3-prong plug to a 2-hole outlet unless it is absolutely necessary, where there are no other options. Never cut off any male ground prongs from any cord or tool. Make sure cords are on dry ground at all times, never on damp ground or in the water. Never carry a power tool by its cord and never jerk the cord to remove it from the outlet. Replace any damaged cords immediately or take cords and/or tools out of service.
- If your power tool overheats, shut it off and allow it to cool completely before using. If you have trouble with a power tool and must inspect it or clean it, turn it off and unplug it!
- Keep all loose clothing away from every tool such as; open jackets, unbuttoned shirts and sleeves, baggy clothes, etc.
- When cutting with saws, cut only on a well-supported flat surface, not balancing the piece being cut. Use a proper support like a saw horse. Always keep the saw's cord away from you and the blade when cutting. Keep your hands and body parts away from blades. Keep your hands away from the path of the saw and always cut away from yourself. Concentrate on the task at hand. Never allow your saw blade to come in contact with foreign objects like stones, metal, or concrete. Keep bystanders far away from the work area.

Hand Tools:
- Never toss tools, nails, pencils or anything around the worksite. There are other people working at the worksite and remember that the family you serve may have small children.
- Never run with tools in your hand or attached to your belt.
Ladders:

- Place ladders only on firm, flat surfaces.
- Place extension ladders so that the base of the ladder is set at a distance equal to ¼ of the height of the ladder from the surface it leans on. Never raise an extension ladder so that it extends the 2nd bottom rung of the upper section beyond the joining brackets. The ladder will move too much when climbing. When climbing to a roof, make sure that extension ladders rest firmly against the roof edge. Ideally, the ladder should be securely strapped to the gutter or edge of the roof somehow and the extended ladder should reach approximately 2-3 rungs above the roof line so that you can step off onto the roof from a lower rung with the ladder to help balance you.
- Check your ladders for damage or for worn and non-working parts.
- Always wear shoes when climbing a ladder; make sure they are free from dirt and mud. Climb with both hands holding the side rails. Always try to have partners hold the ladder securely from the top and/or bottom and against the structure, insuring additional stability.
- As you stand on a ladder, keep your hips between the rails. Never reach more than an arm's length in any direction. When distances beyond your arm's length are needed (as in painting a wall), move the ladder.
- Do not stand or sit on the shelf of a stepladder or climb on its back section, unless double sided.
- Always face the rungs as you climb or descend.
- Never climb or stand on or beyond the second from the top rung on a stepladder.
- Never use an aluminum ladder when working around electricity and/or poorly grounded power tools.
- When you finish with a ladder, take it down and store out of the way and out of reach of children.

Roofing:

- Before stepping on a roof, visually inspect the rafters for strength. This can be done by looking at the ends of rafters at the overhangs and in the attics.
- Keep the roof cleared of debris and watch out for loose shingles, moss, wet or frozen slippery materials.
- On high pitched roofs, use ropes for support. On very steep roofs, build a form of scaffolding or secure a kick board on the roof for a foothold as an aid for safety.
- Walk at an angle on a roof with a steep pitch, never straight up and down. Be very cautious when nearing the edge of a roof and avoid stepping on eaves, as they can sometimes drop with your weight.
- Use work gloves for handling any tin for roofs. Tin is sharp and gets very hot to the touch.
- Never drop things from the roof without making sure it is clear below first. If you accidentally drop something which will fall from the roof endangering anyone below, call out loudly to warn those below, but don't run after it endangering yourself.
- Wear tool belts or nail aprons to carry tools and supplies while on the roof. This will minimize falling tools and trips up and down the ladder.
- If you are afraid of heights, roofing work is not the time to work on your fears. Let others do the roofing and find a more "grounded" job.
- Never get on any roof whenever it is raining and the roof is wet, or any kind of storm is approaching.
- Pick safe vantage points to view your work.
- When working on a tin roof, "walk on the nail heads". There is better support for your weight and the nail heads help with traction.
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Heavy Materials and Equipment:

- Never try to lift overweight objects by yourself. Get help to lift and move.
- When picking up heavy objects, squat, then lift with your legs while keeping your back straight.
- Don’t rush when loading or unloading. Be cautious when carrying oversize items.
- Always use proper vehicles when transporting tools and materials to worksites. Keep all doors and tailgates secured on the vehicles. The mountainous terrain can affect the way these items need to be transported with our vehicles. In some cases, doors may be partially closed and tied with strong rope when objects exceed the length of the vehicle. Keep pickup tailgates up, if possible, to keep longer items from dragging, unless there is a balance issue and smaller items inside the bed. Always attach a red flag to materials that extend 3 feet or more beyond the length of the vehicles. Drive with extreme care. No persons are permitted to ride over the road in the back of SWAP trucks.

Miscellaneous:

- When removing old boards to be thrown away, either remove all nails or discard the boards properly. Do not leave old boards with nails sticking up lying around the worksite.
- If you are unsure of your ability to perform a job, err on the side of caution and speak up! Gaining new skills and attempting new things is part of the experience, but not if it creates any safety hazards.
- Snakes, spiders, rodents, ticks, etc. are a reality. When working around a woodpile or in dark, damp areas, use extreme caution. When planning to lift boards or debris from the ground, striking the object may help scare some critters away. But when picking up the object, lift it so it protects you by keeping it between you and the place it was laying. Stacked wood and building materials which have been sitting on the ground for a while are excellent hiding places for black widow spiders and snakes. Avoid them when possible. If you are bitten, always seek medical attention immediately. Copperheads and rattlesnakes also enjoy the refuge of stacked supplies and also watch out for bees and wasps. If you require special medication for stings, please always keep it with you or in your vehicle. Alert other volunteers and SWAP staff to what they should do for you in the event of an accident.