

Job Name: _____ Job Site Location: _____

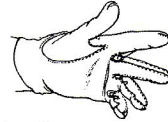
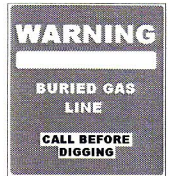
Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____ Foreman/Supervisor: _____

Topic 440: Hand Digging Tool Safety

Introduction: There are many types of heavy equipment available for digging and earth moving which allow efficient performance of excavation work. However, whenever excavation work approaches buried utilities, or accurate finishing of an excavation is required, hand digging is necessary to accomplish the job safely or accurately. Following are guidelines for the safe use of hand digging tools:

Hand digging tools come in a wide variety of styles, but all shovels are designed for the movement of material from one location to another, and picks and digging bars are designed for breaking up hard or compacted material. The choice of the correct style for the job is important for the efficient performance of the work required. A long handled spade point or square shovel is usually the best choice for excavation work. A spade point shovel is used for digging of compacted soils, whereas a square end shovel is best for moving loose material or grading the bottom of a trench.

- **Safe distance** between employees must be maintained by all personnel when working with hand digging tools in an excavation. Sufficient space to safely operate a shovel, pick, or digging bar is a requirement to avoid injury when using hand digging tools.
- **Use of non-conductive** handled tools is required around any energized electrical equipment. Fiberglass handled tools are usually the best for this type work.
- **Stay alert at all times** to what is going on around you while you are digging. Knowing the location of your coworkers, the proximity of heavy equipment, and the conditions of the excavation you may be working in are all vital to safety.
- **Use extreme caution** when uncovering buried utilities with hand tools. A pick or shovel may easily pierce electrical insulation, or crack a gas or water line.
- **Use proper hand protection** whenever using hand digging tools. Heavy leather gloves are best for this type work, although electrically insulated gloves may be required around energized electrical equipment.
- **Wear heavy work boots** or steel toe boots with non slip or heavy lug soles for hand digging work.
- **Ensure that you have secure footing**, as level as possible, when working with digging tools
- **Do not use** a tool with a broken head or a cracked handle.
- **Keep your feet**, and your co-workers feet, clear of where you are digging, picking, or using a digging bar.
- **If working in windy conditions**, it may not always be possible to work up-wind of where the material needs to be thrown, keep eye protection and dust masks on hand for use if needed.
- **Use a steady pace** when moving a large amount of material with a shovel or using any digging tool. A smooth, regular movement will get the job done with less chance of injury or fatigue.
- **Digging or shoveling is hard on the back**; use your arms and legs as much as possible when lifting, twisting as little as possible when throwing material.
- **When digging compacted soils**, do not jump on the shovel to achieve penetration. Keep constant downward pressure on the shovel with one foot and move the shovel back and forth until it is to depth. For highly compacted soils, use a pick or digging bar to loosen soil first before shoveling.
- **Do not use the shovel** for a pry bar/digging bar, or place your entire weight downward on the shovel handle for leverage; this may break the handle or cause you to slip or fall causing injury.
- **Ensure that pick heads** are secured to the handle before use. Keep a moderate point on the pick, neither needle sharp nor rounded off.
- **Pay attention** to where you are throwing your material, especially when working around other people. Keep your direction of throw consistent. Throw material sufficiently far back from the edge of an excavation to ensure that it will not fall or roll back into the excavation.



Conclusion: It is a good idea to do some back stretching exercises before throwing yourself into a large hand digging job. Keeping your abdominal muscles in shape through regular exercise will help to keep your back in shape for digging. An examination by a physician may be required before doing physically demanding work such as hand digging.



Work Site Review

Work-Site Hazards and Safety Suggestions: _____

Personnel Safety Violations: _____

Employee Signatures:

(My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness.)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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These guidelines do not supercede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.