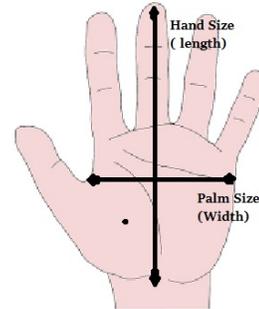


TOOLBOX TALK #13

HAND TOOLS: WHAT'S THE RIGHT SIZE FOR YOU?

If you're not giving much thought to how you choose hand tools, you should. That's the message the Center for Construction Research and Training (also known as CPWR), wants you to keep in mind.

In a normal workday, you may work with these tools for six or more hours. Using the right size handle can reduce fatigue and increase productivity, improve the quality of your work, and reduce the risk for hand and wrist problems.



Determining your hand size

Before using a hand tool, perform a few measurements to help you select the tools that are the right size for you.

Start by determining your hand's length, grip and palm size. To find out the length of your hand, measure the distance from the fold in your wrist below your palm to the tip of the middle finger. For grip, 20% of your hand length equals your grip diameter, CPWR states. For palm size, measure the widest part of your palm. Once you've figured out these measurements, it's time to put them to good use.

Picking a tool

When picking a hand tool, measure its length. Whenever possible, select a tool with a handle length longer than your palm size, CPWR advises, as a handle that's too short may cut into the base of your hand and cause discomfort and possible injury.

When considering grip size, you want the tool to match or be as close to your own grip size as possible. If that doesn't work, you can modify the tool's grip: If it's too small, add a sleeve or cushion made out of duct tape to make the handle bigger. If it's too big, try sanding the handle to a smaller diameter.

Additionally, CPWR recommends keeping the tool's weight in mind, as choosing the lightest-weight version of a tool may reduce the amount of effort and force needed to perform a task and reduce hand and wrist fatigue.