



Safety Guidelines for Habitat Volunteers

Introduction

This document is intended to provide you with a general orientation to volunteering with Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity and a basic understanding of our policies. Note: From here on, Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity will be referred to as NAHFH. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the contents of this document, as it will answer questions related to your volunteer work with NAHFH.

However, this document cannot anticipate every situation. NAHFH reserves the right to change, add to, or eliminate policies described in this document at any time and without notice.

Our Safety Record

NAHFH is especially proud of its safety record. Any injuries consist mostly of a hammer and thumb meeting or simple splinters. We are providing you this document to help us maintain an excellent safety record.

Safety is extremely important to everyone involved with the Habitat program around the world. Accidents can be costly in pain and stress to the injured, costly in dollars and time and at the very least, disruptive. Please remember 99 percent of safety is pure common sense and attitude.

Every Volunteer is a Safety Leader

Safety is everyone's concern. Every volunteer on a NAHFH site becomes a safety leader the moment he/she arrives. An observer can often see danger better than the worker involved in the project and it is his/her obligation to speak to the worker and the supervisor. Since Habitat work crews normally have a high proportion of first time participants, everyone must pay particular attention to safety.

Be conscious of the safety of others as well as your own. Be cautious at all times. Safety is based on knowledge, skill and an attitude of care and concern.

Ask questions. There is a supervisor on each site that can help you identify inherent hazards and instruct you on how to avoid them.

Supervisors on Site (S.O.S)

Our Supervisors on Site, or S.O.S. as they are called by NAHFH, are all skilled volunteers who work with our construction staff to train and supervise other volunteers. They will instruct you about the correct and proper procedures for performing each task. You can identify the S.O.S. volunteer by a name-tag, hat or t-shirt.

Safety Coordinators

We recommend that our sponsors have one person as the designated Safety Coordinator for the job site for each day. The Safety Coordinator will be knowledgeable on everything in this Safety Handbook. The Safety Coordinator's primary responsibility is to watch for safe working conditions and enforce safety rules.

Guidelines for a Safe Build

Be honest about your comfort level. There is no need to be a hero on a Habitat build. If the thought of working at heights bothers you, stay off the roof.

Think about your task. If you are uncertain about how to accomplish your task or how to operate a tool or piece of equipment, ask a supervisor.

Concentrate on the task at hand. Avoid distractions. **Inspect all power tools, hand tools, ladders and scaffolding.** If any unsafe tools or conditions come to your attention contact the supervisor immediately.

Proper Safety Equipment

Wear appropriate clothing. This is as important to safety as the proper selection and use of tools. Loose clothing is dangerous around power equipment. Workers should wear boots or thick-soled shoes. Any person wearing sandals or flip-flops will not be allowed to remain on the job site.

Wear hard hats. They are available onsite. Habitat International standards require that all volunteers and staff wear hard hats during the framing stage of construction (days 1 and 2). Hard hats will also be required whenever a supervisor deems them a necessary and prudent safety measure.

Wear protective eyewear. Eyewear is available onsite and should be worn when using power tools or when determined necessary by the supervisor.

Wear dust masks. Dust masks are available onsite and should be worn when installing insulation or in heavy dust situations.

Wear earplugs. They are available onsite and should be used when subjected to loud noises for an extended period of time.

Power Tools and Other Electrical Devices

Wait for proper instruction. Each volunteer should receive instructions before a power tool is used, including what could happen if it is not used correctly. A supervisor should give instructions to all volunteers, including experienced do-it-yourself-ers.

Check for defects. Check all power tools – switches, cords and plugs. Pay special attention to blade guards to make sure they operate correctly. Under no circumstances should you ever disable a blade guard. Defective tools should not be used and the supervisor should be notified so that they can remove the tool from service immediately.

Examine extension cords. They should be of sufficient size (check with the supervisor) and in good condition. Keep cords out of mud or water and avoid stepping on them.

Hand Tools

Select the proper tool. Make sure you are using the right tool for the job at hand and make sure it's the proper size. If you're unsure, ask the supervisor.

Check the condition of the tool. Avoid tools with loose handles or tools that are dull. Oil or dirt on a tool can cause it to slip. Make sure the tools are clean.

Hold tools correctly. A hammer should be held at the base of the handle to ensure maximum efficiency, while a knife should be held in such a manner as to allow you to cut away from your body.

Carry tools in a container so that your hands are free to climb ladders.

Handle and carry all tools with care. Carry only a few tools at a time or carry them in a tool belt with special compartments. Keep sharp or pointed tools pointed away from you. Be conscious of where you lay your tools down. Never lay a hammer down on the slope of a roof or the top of a stepladder.

Faulty or improperly used hand tools are a safety hazard. Broken or fractured handles on hammers, axes and similar equipment must be reported to the supervisor on site immediately.

Appropriate safety glasses, face shields, etc. must be worn while using hand tools or equipment which might produce flying materials or are subject to breakage.

Use extreme caution with a saw. Never bind a saw blade, especially a power saw. It can result in a very dangerous bucking action that can cause serious injury. Support what you are cutting in a proper fashion to avoid kickback or to prevent a cut board from falling where it could drop on someone.

Ladders

Inspect all ladders before use. If the ladder is unsafe, don't use it. Look for wear and tear, loose rungs and any defects.

Use ladders of proper length. An extension ladder should reach three feet above the work level.

Move your ladder with your work. Don't lean too far. If both of your shoulders are outside the ladder you are leaning too far and serious injury could occur.

Set your ladder at the proper angle. For every four feet of height, the bottom of the ladder should be one foot away from the wall. You are at the correct angle if, when you place your toes against the base of the ladder and stand erect, you can reach out and grasp the rung at shoulder height.

Place your ladder on solid footing. Avoid mud or gravel. If there is a risk of the ladder slipping, tie or stake the ladder down. If the ladder is not level, dig the ground out from under the high leg rather than "block up" the other leg. Always face the ladder.

Be cautious with aluminum ladders. Never use an aluminum ladder near electrical lines, in inclement weather or on windy days.

- **Have only one person on a ladder at a time.**
- **Wear shoes with clean, nonskid soles – not leather.**
- **Face the ladder while climbing up or down and hold the side rails with both hands.**
- **Carry tools up and down on a belt or with a rope or hoist, not in your hands.**
- **Work with one hand on the ladder, keeping your tools in a hanger or container.**

- **Don't step on the top two stepladder steps or the top four ladder rungs.**
- **Keep your body centered on the ladder so your belt buckle is between the side rails.**
- **Don't move a ladder while you're on it.**
- **Keep your own movements on a ladder slow and cautious.**

Scaffolding

Use the proper scaffolding. All scaffolding must be designed to support four times the weight of the worker and materials resting on it. Special care should be taken to ensure scaffolding components are compatible.

Inspect scaffolding every day. When erecting scaffolding, make sure the legs are resting on adequate sills and that the equipment is plumb and level.

Many scaffolding accidents occur when the walk boards are inadequate or defective. Inspect planking frequently and remove any defective or suspect pieces.

Clean Jobsite and Tool Care

Maintain a clean jobsite. Keeping a neat and organized work site contributes to efficiency and is important in preventing accidents.

Clean up all rubbish and scrap as you go. Do not allow wood scraps, nails or any trash to pile up. They interfere with work and can be a hazard.

Keep up with tools and equipment that are not being used and return them to the tool container. This protects the tools as well as the workers.

First Aid and Emergency Care

Habitat strives to have a medically trained person on site at all times. We invite all volunteers who are trained or certified in first aid and CPR to identify themselves.

Most importantly, know the location of the first aid kit and how to get emergency help. There are first aid kits in each Safety Kit and there is a Safety Kit at each house.

Emergency Medical Treatment

Do NOT attempt to treat anyone unless you are trained medical staff.

Get help. Notify the Safety Coordinator and Habitat construction staff immediately.

Bloodborne Pathogens

What are bloodborne pathogens? Bloodborne pathogens are viruses or bacteria present in human blood and bodily fluids, which can infect and cause disease in humans. The two most notable of these are Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS, and Hepatitis B Virus (HBV).

HIV infection may mimic a variety of other medical illnesses. The prevention of HIV infection depends on infection control practices in occupational settings, screening of blood products, and precautions regarding sexual practices.

HBV causes the Hepatitis B infection. The incubation period of Hepatitis B ranges from 45 to 160 days. The onset of the acute disease occurs gradually and is discovered in the patient only after the illness has become fully involved.

The two most common ways bloodborne pathogens are spread are through sexual transmission or IV drug use. However, any contact with infected blood or body fluids carries the risk of potential infection.

How to protect yourself from bloodborne pathogens

- 1. Protect yourself first... treat the victim SECOND.**
- 2. Treat all blood and body fluid spills as if they are infectious.**
- 3. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment. Most accident responses will require only gloves for adequate protection; however, other protection may include gowns, face shields, facemasks and eye protection.**
- 4. When performing CPR, always use a pocket mask equipped with a one-way valve to prevent contact with potentially infectious body fluids.**

Medical liability insurance coverage

NAHFH carries a medical liability insurance policy on volunteers at the jobsite. Coverage is provided for any out-of-pocket expenses or deductibles a volunteer may incur due to an injury on the jobsite.

If the volunteer does not have medical insurance coverage, our policy will cover the medical expense limited to the injuries sustained on the jobsite and by the waiver signed by the volunteer.

General Policies

Unlawful Harassment and Discrimination NAFHFH expects all volunteers to behave in a way that reinforces the Christian mission and founding principles of the organization. All volunteers should be accorded respect and consideration and feel that NAFHFH provides a safe and productive environment. NAFHFH prohibits any actions or conduct that may discriminate against or harass others.

If you feel that you have been harassed, you should notify the NAFHFH supervisor in charge without delay. NAFHFH will investigate all claims of prohibited harassment.

Resolving Issues with Others As in all workplaces, personal differences may occur among individuals. It is important for you and NAFHFH that issues are not allowed to fester and detract from your important contribution to this ministry. We believe that the quickest way to resolve the issues is to approach the individual(s) involved so that an appropriate solution can be reached. If this initial conversation does not lead to resolution or you feel uncomfortable discussing the matter with the person directly, we ask that you speak with the NAFHFH supervisor in charge to resolve the matter.

Workplace Violence Policy NAFHFH can best perform its mission when all associates coexist in a climate that supports a free exchange of ideas and uses constructive methods of conflict resolution. Habitat is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free from disruptive, threatening and violent behavior at the NAFHFH build site, HomeStores, and office.

NAHFH Equipment and Property Please be respectful of NAFHFH property, tools, and equipment. Take good care of tools and supplies so that they remain in good and safe working condition. All tools, equipment, and supplies cost money and you can help us keep our costs down with proper use and storage.

Personal Appearance and Dress Code NAFHFH maintains a policy of conservative attire worn in good taste and appropriate to the situation. Build site and HomeStores: All volunteers must wear sneakers or boots. Open toe shoes, flip-flops, and high heels are prohibited.

Please refrain from wearing tight fitting, revealing, low cut, sheer clothing, or ultra short shorts. Cut-offs, stained, or ripped clothes are not appropriate attire for the HomeStore, build site or office as they are open to the general public.

Smoking NAFHFH is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that is safe and healthful. Please refrain from using tobacco products inside the HomeStores, office, and Habitat houses. Tobacco products may not be used while unloading trucks or during other volunteer-related tasks.

Drug and Alcohol Policy NAFHFH is a Drug-Free Workplace. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of controlled substances is prohibited at all our work sites. At no time is alcohol permitted at the NAFHFH build site, HomeStores, or office.

Volunteer Responsibility

You are volunteering to work at the NAFHFH's build site, HomeStore, HomeWORKS or offices at your own risk after reading this NAFHFH Safety document.

If for any reason you believe that by your working at the build site, HomeStore, HomeWORKS or NAFHFH office might endanger yourself or others, you must report this immediately to the NAFHFH supervisor in charge. This might include – among other things – communicable diseases, physical impairments and medication (prescription and otherwise) that might impair your judgment.

If you encounter an injured person at the build site, HomeStore, HomeWORKS or NAFHFH office, you should not attempt to provide medical attention to the person unless you are trained to do so.

If you encounter an injured person at the build site, HomeStore, HomeWORKS or NAFHFH office you should notify the supervisor in charge immediately.

For emergencies call 911

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