



## SAFETY HANDBOOK FOR HABITAT VOLUNTEERS

This handbook is intended to provide you with a general orientation to volunteering with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Nashville (Habitat Nashville) and a basic understanding of our policies. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook, as it will answer questions related to your volunteer work with Habitat Nashville. However, this handbook cannot anticipate every situation. Habitat Nashville reserves the right to change, add to, or eliminate policies described below at any time and without notice.

**You can find an electronic copy of the Safety Handbook and more information about Habitat for Humanity of Greater Nashville at: <https://www.habitatnashville.org/volunteer>**

### **Volunteer Responsibility:**

- I am volunteering to work at Habitat Nashville's build site at my own risk after reading the Habitat Nashville Safety Handbook.
- If for any reason I believe that my working at the build site might endanger myself or others, I must report this to Habitat's construction team immediately.
- This might include, among other things, physical impairments, medication (prescription and otherwise that might impair my judgment) or communicable diseases.
- If I encounter an injured person at the build site, I should not attempt to provide medical attention to the person unless I am a licensed medical professional.
- If I encounter an injured person at the build site, I must notify a Habitat staff member.

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## **Our Mission**

Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.

## **General Policies**

### **Unlawful Harassment and Discrimination**

Habitat Nashville 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 Habitat Nashville provides a safe and productive environment. Habitat Nashville prohibits any actions or conduct that may discriminate against or harass others.

If you feel that you have been harassed, you should notify Volunteer Experience Specialist of your concerns without delay. Habitat Nashville will investigate all claims of harassment.

### **Resolving Issues with Others**

As in all workplaces, personal differences may occur among individuals. It is important for you and Habitat Nashville 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 a supervisor to resolve the matter.

### **Workplace Violence Policy**

Habitat Nashville can best perform its mission when all associates coexist in a climate that supports a free exchange of ideas and utilizes constructive methods of conflict resolution. Habitat is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free from disruptive, threatening and violent behavior.

### **Habitat Nashville Equipment and Property**

Please be respectful of Habitat Nashville property, tools, and equipment. Take good care of tools and supplies so that they remain in good and safe working condition. You can help us keep our costs down with proper use and storage of all tools, equipment, and supplies.

### **Drug and Alcohol Policy**

Habitat Nashville is a Tennessee 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 Habitat Nashville build site.

### **Smoking**

Habitat Nashville is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that is safe and healthful. Please refrain from using tobacco products inside Habitat houses.

## **We're Proud of our Safety Record**

Habitat Nashville is especially proud of its safety record. Our injuries consist mostly of a hammer and thumb meeting or simple splinters. We are providing you this booklet 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.

**Safety is everyone's concern.** Every volunteer on a Habitat Nashville 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 inexperienced people, 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 or manager on each site that can help you identify inherent hazards and instruct you on how to avoid them.

### **Safety Coordinators**

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

### **Supervisors on Site (S.O.S.)**

Our Supervisors on Site, or S.O.S. , are skilled volunteers who work with our construction staff to train and supervise you. They will instruct you about the correct and proper procedures for performing each task.

You can identify the S.O.S. volunteer by a nametag or a yellow tshirt with SOS on the back.

### **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 ladders.

**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.

If you must use your cell phone, move away from the immediate build area and away from the street to a safe area until you are finished.

**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, closed-toe 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 and must be worn if anyone is working above you or when determined necessary by the supervisor.

**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 not used correctly. A supervisor should give instructions to all volunteers, including experienced do-it-yourselfers.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Nail guns have the potential to cause serious injury.** It is important to always use nail guns with caution and to review all safety measures and warnings before using a nail gun. Keep hands and fingers out of the line of fire and aim the gun away from the body and make sure the tool is placed firmly against the work piece.

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

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

## **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 & Tool Care**

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

**Clean up all trash 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.

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