



MARINE MINERALS ADMINISTRATION SAFETY ALERT

Safety Alert No. 523
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Improper Use of Hand Tools and Unplanned Deviations from Job Tasks Results in Injuries

*Prevent Injuries by Disconnecting Tools and Stopping Work Before
Task Changes*

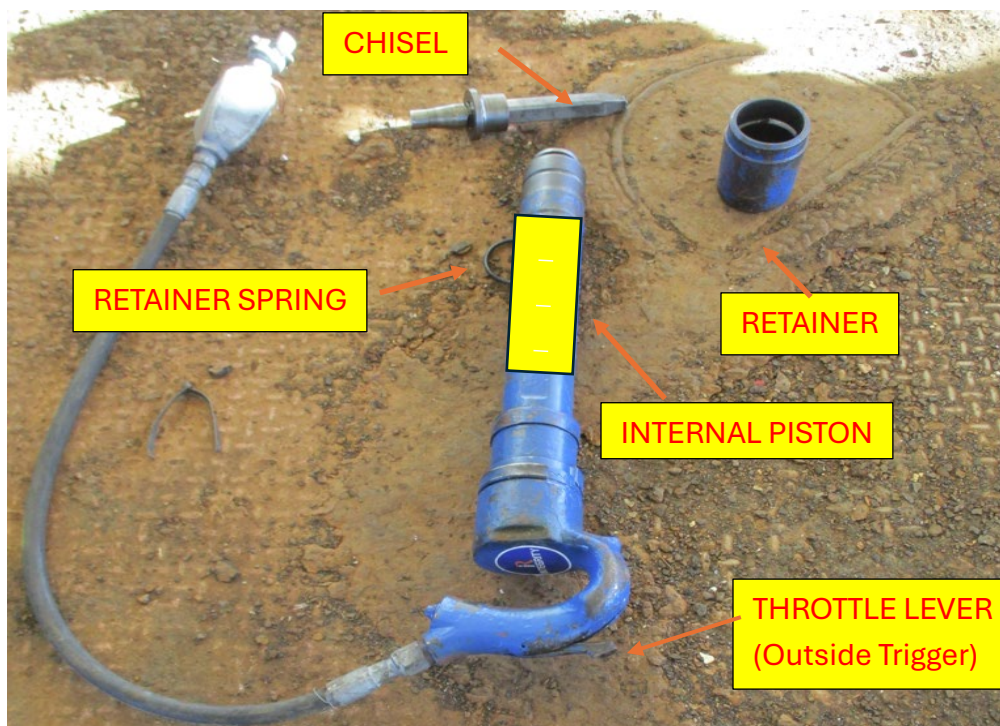


Figure 1: Rivet Buster with throttle on outside of handle.

Background:

The Marine Minerals Administration recently reviewed two incidents involving hand tools and unplanned changes to assigned work. Both incidents resulted in injuries and highlighted the importance of following job safety analyses (JSAs), using required personal

protective equipment (PPE) and stopping work when tools, conditions or work methods change.

Incident 1:

A construction crew member was injured on a Gulf of America offshore production platform while using a pneumatic rivet buster tool to remove rusted bolts from an overhead 10-inch line (Figure 1).

The tool malfunctioned, and the crew member lowered it to the deck without disconnecting the air supply. While troubleshooting, the crew member began disassembling the tool and turned it upward. The tool handle pressed against the deck and engaged the throttle lever (outside trigger), causing an internal piston to eject from the tool and strike the crew member in the face, resulting in a laceration.



Figure 2: Reciprocating Saw (Sawzall). (Image provided by operator.)

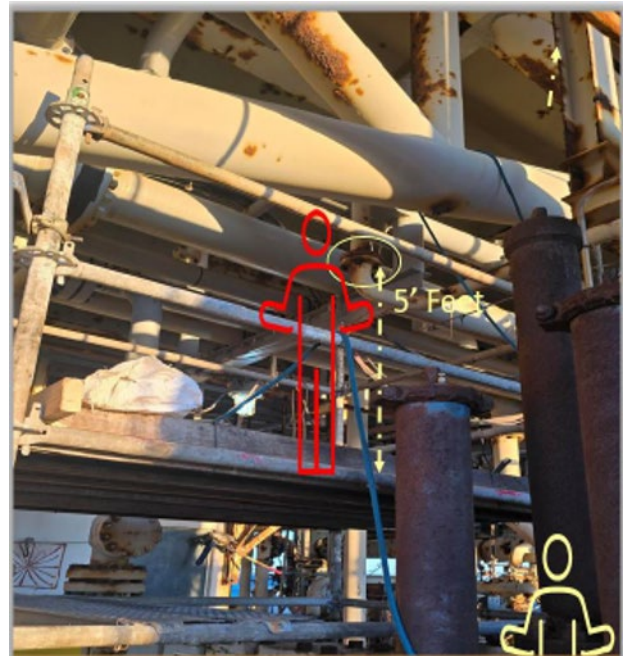


Figure 3: The injured person (RED) was over 6 feet tall. The scaffold deck was 5 feet below the bottom flange. (Image provided by operator.)

Incident 2:

A construction crew member was cold-cutting four bolts from a flange assembly. The job safety analysis (JSA) identified pneumatic tools, including an impact wrench and hammer wrenches, for the task.

The crew member first attempted to remove the bolts with a battery-operated impact wrench before switching to an electric reciprocating saw (Sawzall) (Figure 2). This change

was made without stopping work, discussing the change with supervision or nearby crew members, or updating the JSA to identify new hazards and controls.

Before removing the final two bolts, the crew member again decided to deviate from the job safety analysis by removing his face shield, which was part of the required personal protective equipment. According to the operator's report, the crew member removed the face shield because of his position on the scaffolding and the location of the remaining bolts (Figure 3). While cutting through the last bolt, the Sawzall kicked back, causing the crew member to lose control of the tool. The tool struck the crew member in the nose, causing a laceration that required stitches.

Therefore, MMA recommends that operators and their contractors, where appropriate, consider the following:

- Ensure workers disconnect air-powered equipment when not in use.
- Release trapped pressure from pneumatic tools before performing maintenance.
- Follow the original equipment manufacturers (OEM) instructions and discuss identified safety precautions, if any.
- Ensure workers keep themselves and others out of the line of fire and never point tools toward themselves or other workers.
- Confirm workers understand the operator's maintenance procedures and the limits on repairing rented tools. Remove malfunctioning tools from service when required and replace them instead of attempting unauthorized repairs.
- Follow the job safety analysis process. Do not change tools, tasks or work scope without stopping work, notifying the responsible party or person in charge, reviewing the job site and updating the job safety analysis to address new hazards and controls.
- Do not remove personal protective equipment to complete a job. If personal protective equipment interferes with the task, stop work, reassess the situation, and identify a safer method that allows the job to be completed while maintaining the highest level of worker protection.
- Ensure workers understand job safety analyses, safety meetings, stop work authority and ultimate work authority in a language they understand. When language barriers exist, provide translated written materials or other effective communication methods and document those controls. When applicable, include communication or language barriers in emergency drill scenarios so crews can confirm all personnel understand emergency instructions.

- Review [BSEE Safety Alert 485 - Hand Tools Pose Risk to Offshore Personnel](#), and share relevant lessons with workers who use hand tools offshore.

– MMA –

As of July 10, 2026, the Department of Interior has reunified the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement into the Marine Minerals Administration, which will oversee the responsible development of the nation's offshore energy and marine mineral resources with an integrated focus on safety, environmental protection and efficient oversight. For more information, visit [Transition to the Marine Minerals Administration | U.S. Department of the Interior](#).

 A Safety Alert is a tool used by MMA to inform the offshore oil and gas industry of the circumstances surrounding a potential safety issue. It also contains recommendations that could assist in avoiding potential incidents on the Outer Continental Shelf.