

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older

#98 WOOD LATHE SAFETY



Photograph Courtesy of Mendocino and Lake Counties 4-H Camp

Wood lathes are designed to rotate at variable speeds which can exceed 2,500 rpm on some machines. As a result, the wood piece being turned is capable of catching loose clothing, jewelry, or hair and throwing or spinning off sharp pieces of wood. According to information available from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, common injuries experienced while using a lathe include foreign bodies in the eye, fractured fingers, and lacerations to the hands and fingers. Thus, a wood lathe must be used with caution to avoid injuries.

Pre-Use Activities

- Thoroughly review and understand information provided in the manufacturer's manual for operating a wood lathe with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Before using, always inspect the wood lathe for damage, disrepair, or missing parts, including assessing whether all

clamps are tight and the workpiece clears the tool rest. Make sure all shields and guards are securely in place.

- If the wood lathe fails your inspection, inform your group leader, parent, or guardian and remove it from use.

Operating Precautions

- Beginning wood lathe operators shall receive training by an appropriately experienced instructor.
- Never wear a tie, loose clothing, gloves, dangling items, or jewelry when using a wood lathe.
- Tie long hair back or secure under a cap.
- Always wear safety glasses or goggles when operating a lathe. Wear a dust mask when using the lathe to sand the workpiece.
- Use wood stock that is free of defects such as knots, cracks, and splits.
- Do not remount a workpiece after it has been removed from the faceplate.
- Turn the wood lathe off and disconnect the power cord before making equipment adjustments.
- Wood lathe tools must be sharp, correctly sharpened, and properly maintained.
- Only use wood lathe tools for their intended purpose.
- Determine the correct lathe speed for the diameter of the workpiece.
- Assume a well-balanced and comfortable stance when operating a wood lathe.
- Keep your hands a safe distance from the workpiece and never reach across a wood lathe when it is turning.
- Maintain a clearance of about 1/8 inch between the workpiece and tool rest. Before starting, always turn the workpiece by hand to make sure it will clear the tool rest.
- Use a firm and comfortable grip on wood lathe tools.
- When starting a new workpiece, begin by operating the lathe at the lowest speed. Continue operating the lathe at a low speed until the workpiece becomes cylinder shaped.
- Prior to beginning a cut, make sure the tool is positioned on the tool rest.
- Turn the lathe off to frequently check if the clamps remain tight.
- Remove the tool rest before starting to sand or polish the workpiece.
- Never leave an operating wood lathe unattended. Turn off the wood lathe power when not in use.
- Do not use your fingers to remove wood shavings. Use a brush to sweep wood shavings from the lathe.
- If you suffer an injury while using a wood lathe, tell your group leader, parent, or guardian. Seek medical attention if the injury is serious.