

MAKE SHOP SAFETY A HABIT

According to “ How To Restore Your Collector Car “ by Tom Brownell, taking the necessary precautions to insure shop safety is about the last thing an eager hobbyist thinks about as he starts out to restore or fix up an old car. Safety consciousness is important precisely for this reason. Restorers, car buffs, generally putter about blithely in a lethal environment and call working on cars “recreation “. Consider the risks: many modern paints contain toxic chemicals. Gasoline, which should never be used to clean parts, but often is, and of course, is stored in the car’s gas tank packs enormous explosive power. Electrical hazards include the possibility of fire from shorted wiring and shocks. Welding torches expose hobbyists who use them carelessly, to the danger of burns, or worse calamities, if welding near the gas tank, that could ignite fuel fumes. Using power tools also carries a risk, though more to limbs than life. Naturally, each of these presents a greater danger to children who play in the shop or enjoy watching the work.

Before starting to work on your car, consider the attitudes that are most conducive to safety, then, inspect your shop following the safety guidelines contained in this article. An accident prevented is worth all the time making sure that your shop is a safe place to work. Shop safety results from carefully cultivated habits and a frame of mind that says “quit when frustration builds“. A hobby, be it car restoration or any other should provide a change of pace and in that sense offer relaxation. Even so, there are bound to be times when everything goes wrong. When you feel trouble brewing, step back and reflect on the progress you have made thus far. Don’t let anger or anxiety distort your thinking. If you are still pent up, quit while you are ahead. Things will look brighter from a fresh start.

Frustration and anger aren’t the only mental states that threaten shop safety. Carelessness can be equally hazardous. Hobbyists need to develop a cautious attitude about using power tools, such as grinders, and with welding or working with chemicals including paint products, rust and degreasing agents, even fiber glass resin. Shop accidents occur most often when hobbyists neglect warnings and precautions. Keep in mind that the presence of children always dictates greater caution. Use the advice on this

list as a guide to shop safety. If you notice other potential hazards, correct them as you prepare your shop.

- Be acutely aware of your surroundings, hazardous conditions, such as hoses that are on the floor not rolled up, oil spills should be cleaned up immediately, dirty tools should be cleaned up and put away after each use.
- Fire extinguishers and signs should be posted at every corner of every shop, and should be easily accessible. When working on carburetors, tune ups, gas tanks, welding, and body work, keep a fire extinguisher nearby. Oil stained shop towels, should be discarded in a steel wastebasket designed for this purpose.
- Keep parts and tools on shelves where they can be found easily and won't be objects to kick out of the way.
- Maintain sharp cutting edges on tools such as chisels and drill bits.
- When using shop tools, become acutely aware of their safety features and use. Safety goggles and face shields should be used when using bench grinders and wire wheels. No rings, watches, long sleeves or long hair should be present when using shop equipment.
- Store paints, solvents, rust remover, or any toxic chemicals, in locked cabinets where they will be kept safely out of children's reach.
- Always read health warnings. A label that states "danger", this product could be harmful or fatal, means just that. Warning labels often list emergency antidotes such as washing the exposed area. If you are using a mildly toxic lye solution to decrease parts, for example, keep a supply of water handy to rinse exposed skin.
- Install a first aid kit in your shop where it can be reached quickly.

- If you are spray painting, install a ventilation system and wear a charcoal activated painter's mask. Professional painters work in spray booths with powerful ventilation fans that remove toxic fumes. Hobbyists sometimes spray paints that can irritate respiratory distress syndrome, ARDS, a cardiac like condition, can result from failure to take the precaution to wear a respirator or use an exhaust fan. Never spray paint near a open flame or hot electrical connections.
- Always use jack stands while working under any vehicle. Many people have met their destiny by relying on a floor jack with a ten cent seal that failed.
- Double up for safety, if you are working on an engine mounted on an engine stand. It is wise to take the precaution of supporting the engine's weight with a chain or cable suspended from an overhead support.
- Use parts cleaning fluid and, preferably, a parts washer for degreasing parts. Avoid cleaning parts in gasoline.
- Always disconnect batteries when working on electrical systems on any car. Frayed, spliced, and old wiring can turn your beloved collector car into a fire ball. Inspect and replace bad wiring and electrical components.
- When working on, or tuning up, 61-66 T-Birds with the famous swing-away drop in gear steering column, never leave these cars unattended. These cars have been known to drop in gear and run away. When doing tune up work, chock the wheels, or better yet, have someone step on the brake while doing tune up work. Better yet, perform these safety precautions when working on any car.

- Develop the habit of anticipating the possible consequences of your actions.

Working on any vehicle can be hazardous and dangerous which could lead to injury or death. When in doubt, always consult a professional. The preceding article and all articles are meant as a guide. The Hoosier Vintage Thunderbird Club Board, members, or affiliates assume no responsibility with one's actions or results while working on any vehicle.

Safety is a product of caution, precaution and mind over mood. No hobby, however rewarding, is worth jeopardizing your health.

Respectfully Submitted,

Larry L. Sneary

Automobiles-Conservation and Restoration, Tom Brownell, Motor Books International, 1983