

Safety Tips - Potpourri (Gary Guenther)

We should all review the AAW list of Safety Tips periodically to make sure we haven't picked up any bad habits, but, additionally, lots of practical things may not appear there. Here are a few observations I made recently while roughing out some of the too-many blanks I created this spring when the (unwelcome) tree cutters came through our neighborhood. I'll try not to make it boring.

Watch your thumb at the tool rest. I have found that I tend to let my "front" thumb stick out with the tool shank over the rest. Several times I have found it uncomfortably close to the action. This is particularly dangerous when your vision is obstructed by a mass of fresh curls. I am trying to remind myself to keep it farther away and not let it stick out.

Take the point out of your tail center if you are not using it. There are nightmare stories of what can happen when you unexpectedly jam your elbow into that sharp point that you thought was safely out of the way with the tail stock all the way down the bed.

Even Doug Thompson PM/cryo gouges have to be sharpened occasionally. If it acts dull, it probably is. Dull tools will get you into trouble.

Beware of distractions:

- I have given my wife strict instructions about how to safely get my attention if I'm in the middle of a cut. (The first option is "don't".)
- Many turners can tell what's going on without looking – sound is very important to safe turning. This can be a problem for me since I turn outside. If a neighbor cranks up a lawn mower or leaf blower, I take a break. Listen to your tool – it's definitely telling you some things if you're listening.
- Having a TV on and in sight is not a good idea. I've never done it myself, but just a thought for our present days of video mania.
- Ignore the mosquitoes. Swatting at one with a razor-sharp gouge in your hand and the lathe turning 1000 rpm is not a good idea. Speaking of mosquitoes, I've heard that those drier sheets for your wash make a good repellent. I can't swear if it works or not (it's hard to prove the negative), but I'm hanging a couple half-out of my pockets with some apparent success.

Accelerator only dries CA glue on the outside where it touches it. If you shoot some glue down a deep crack or bark inclusion, hit it with accelerator, and then start cutting, don't be surprised to see some fresh residue on your banjo (hopefully not on your face shield – you know, the one you ALWAYS wear, right?).

Wear your dust mask around your neck so you can pull it up quickly and easily when needed. That way you'll use it when you might otherwise think twice about going to get it. One of the times when it is needed is when you brush off your turning apron. I find myself doing that fairly often (no doubt something from my childhood), and if you don't wear your mask, the fines will go right up your nose. Remember, it's the sub-micron stuff you can't see that really damages your lungs. It's also very important to wear it when sweeping up! Amy Rothberg usually has inexpensive sub-micron masks (3M 9211 N95) available for sale at CAW meetings. Wear it around your grinder too.

No matter how much light you have, it's not enough or from the right angle. Far too often I find myself keeping a tool working in a place that I can't see as well as I should. The results of this can range from frustrating (oops, that rim is a little too thin) to dangerous. Use lots of light and move it around to suit your momentary needs. You'll find that a low angle light (right down the rails) is great for showing minor imperfections in your cuts.

Don't be too aggressive with cuts in areas of different density. I hadn't launched a piece out of a chuck for quite a while, but I did recently when I was casually beginning to hollow where I had inserted a temporary dowel to fill a poorly located hole that I had drilled for a screw chuck. (Luckily the piece landed without damage to that bark edge I had just worked hard on. Take that, Murphy!) I don't expect that you'll run into too many dowels, but you can get some interesting results from unexpected bark inclusions opening up, internal knots, and punky areas. You can usually feel the tool acting a little strangely – it's trying to tell you something. Stop and take a look.

Re-torque your chuck once in a while, just because. It's usually tight, but it's nice to know it for sure.

Now that was pretty painless, wasn't it? Happy and safe turning.