

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety focus for the months of December and January will be about the safe use of hand tools. With the Christmas holidays and the regatta season coming up we are likely to be doing those small maintenance jobs on our yachts. While the job might be small the tools we use are likely to have sharp or abrasive edges. I am thinking particularly of chisels and scalpels or rotating tools like the angle grinder or the drill.

When I joined the Royal New Zealand Airforce I spent six months on a basic engineering course and although I was going to use nothing more dangerous than a soldering iron we were taught how to use everything in the workshop from the lathe to the welder and had safety procedures “drilled” into us. Even so, every once in a year or two I have a near miss which reminds me to stick to the safety rules.

If you have to hold a piece of wood while using a scalpel or chisel then work away from your hand.

When using an angle grinder you will be wearing the goggles and ear-muffs but will you also be keeping your head away from the plane of rotation. Think about where a piece of the wheel will fly if it comes off?

Even with a simple job such as enlarging a hole in a small metal fitting, clamp the job or at least use vice-grips.

The sail away message this month is to think through what will happen next after the chisel slips, the blade snags or the drill bites into the metal. You need a well maintained body to crew that well maintained boat.

**Kerry O'Brien
Vice Commodore**