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**QST Issue:** Jan 2009

**Title:** Shop Safety

**Author:** Don Daso, K4ZA

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# Shop Safety



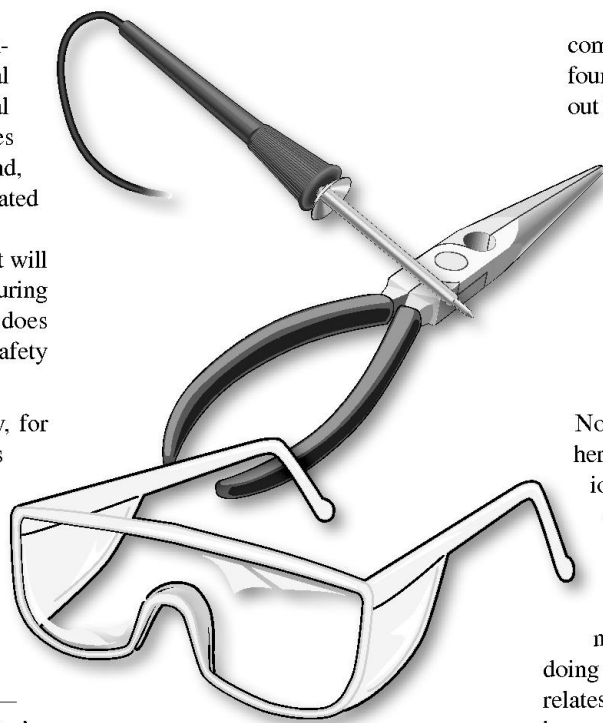
*A project is no fun if you're injured before it's done.*

Don Daso, K4ZA

My series of brief *QST* workshop articles generated several e-mails and a couple of postal responses.<sup>1</sup> In many cases my replies related to safety. So, with that in mind, here is a brief expansion on safety-related issues in the radio workshop.

All of the fun of a ham radio project will undoubtedly be lost if you get hurt during the building process. To ensure that does not happen, let's set up some basic safety guidelines:

- 1 Read the manual! Just the other day, for instance, I had a client remark (as I was about to grease his thrust bearing) that he simply hated trying to refill his own gun. Turns out, for over 20 years he'd been doing it wrong!
- 2 Don't work (or even attempt to) when you are tired. This is especially true when your life is at risk — such as when doing tower work. You're much more likely to make a mistake or to forget some simple safety procedure.
- 3 Wear the proper safety equipment. Safety glasses will protect your eyes from flying projectiles (tiny wire snippets molten solder or splashing chemicals, for example). Again, if you're doing tower work (even on the ground), a hard hat is simple protection.
- 4 Don't disable safety features built into your tools or equipment, especially if your work involves climbing.
- 5 A clean shop is always safer than a messy or dirty shop. Besides, if your shop is organized, you'll be able to find just what you're looking for, when you want



it. That's the way things are supposed to work, anyhow!

- 6 Always treat power tools with the respect they deserve, especially because they are not very forgiving. Tuck in your shirt, button or roll up your sleeves and remove any jewelry (or a tie) before you begin working.
- 7 Don't work alone (if at all possible). Have someone nearby who can help should you find yourself in trouble.
- 8 You should have a single switch on your workbench that cuts the power when thrown and, of course, having a fire extinguisher nearby is always a good idea for any workshop.
- 9 It's also not a bad idea to have a small first aid kit in the shop. Various sizes and shapes of adhesive bandages, some first aid ointment, some gauze patches, tape,

compresses and hydrogen peroxide can be found in mine. Display the kit at eye level out in the open — so anyone and everyone can see and find it. It isn't flashy, but it is definitely worth buying.

- 10 Finally, *think* about what you're doing while working. If you're worried about something else (whatever it might be), forget about losing yourself in your work; it is probably not going to happen.

None of the simple rules I've outlined here can cover all of the possible scenarios you may encounter. You're responsible for your own safety — always! It's just this simple: The equipment, voltages, chemicals and tools we use can create problems if we're not careful. Think about what you're doing until you understand how the process relates to the tools you're using. You have to be careful. A few simple rules (practiced so they become natural actions) will ensure a long, trouble-free life in any workshop.

Don Daso, K4ZA, an ARRL Life member, was first licensed in Ohio in 1963 as WN8HJW. Upgrading, he became WA8MAZ a year later. Don works professionally in film/video production, holding BS/MFA degrees. He dabbles quite a bit in tower and antenna construction for a wide variety of clients, based in Charlotte, North Carolina. Don also writes the "Workshop Chronicles" column in the National Contest Journal that reflects his continuing interest in both the competitive nature of our hobby and in sharing ideas and information with others. You can contact Don at 515 Withershinn Dr, Charlotte, NC 28262-0477; k4za@juno.com.

**QST**

<sup>1</sup>D. Daso, K4ZA, "Blades on the Radio Workbench," *QST*, May 2006, p 61; "Soldering — Tips for Shopping, Survival and Success," *QST*, Mar 2006, p 51; "'Wrenching' Suggestions," *QST*, Jan 2006, p 56, and "The Ham's Essential Toolkit," *QST*, Nov 2005, p 63.

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