

Carving Safely

by Sam Riley

The following suggestions are offered to make your carving experiences more pleasurable as well as safer.

1. Blades/edges should be kept very sharp. Sharp edges require less pressure to make clean cuts and result in better control of the tool. If you have difficulty sharpening your edges, get some “hands on” instruction from a carver who has mastered this task.
2. Develop and maintain a constant awareness of where and how far your blade will travel when it comes out of the cut under pressure. Other body parts, grandchildren and pets could be in harm’s way. (Talking politics while carving is not a good idea.)
3. Some inexperienced carvers have a sense of dread and a fear of cutting themselves to the extent that it limits their potential carving ability and enjoyment. A carver’s glove worn on the holding hand will eliminate the necessity for extreme caution and lead to more carving enjoyment. These gloves have metal mesh in the fabric and afford excellent protection. Some users of safety gloves have had difficulty gripping the work piece. A thin coat of rubberized caulking compound applied only to the surface of the glove that comes into contact with the work piece will greatly reduce the problem.
4. A well-equipped carving tool box will include a few Band Aids and a small tube of Neosporin. Nicks and cuts, whether they be yours, or a friend’s, will heal much faster with a dab of Neosporin covered with a Band Aid.
5. Avoid breathing in sawing/grinding dust, especially if you are working with spalted wood. Micro-organisms are often present in spalted wood that have been known to attack the lungs of woodcarvers resulting in incurable lung diseases. Dust masks and/or dust collectors should be used without fail.

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