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# LEATHERCRAFT SAFETY

*Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older.*



Leathercraft or leatherworking activities include the use of techniques and processes such as ornamenting, sewing, cutting, carving, staining, stamping, punching, gluing, and burning leather. 4-H members that participate in leathercraft activities must be knowledgeable about the safe use of sharp and pounding tools, glues and stains, and electric burners. Common injuries sustained during leathercraft activities include cuts, punctures, bruises, burns, and scrapes to the fingers and hands.

### Leathercraft Activity Preparation

- Prior to using an electric burner, inspect the burner and power cord for damage.
- Inspect all sharp and pounding tools for excessive wear or damage. Check leather knife, cutter, and shear blades for dullness.
- If an electric burner or any leathercraft tool fails your inspection, inform your group leader, parent, or guardian and remove it from use.

### Leathercraft Activity Precautions

- Always wear eye protection when stamping or punching leather and closed-toed shoes that fully protect your feet. If available, wear an apron made of heavy fabric or leather.
- Always cut in a direction away from your body and appendages when using a leather knife or cutter. If you drop a knife or cutter do not attempt to catch it. Let it fall to the floor.
- When using leather shears, cut away from your body in regular, small strokes. Resting the shears against a table allows for better cutting control. It is easier to cut from right to left when you are right handed and from left to right when left handed.
- Never run with a pair of leather shears or leather knife/cutter in your hand.
- Carefully grasp awls, edgers, bevelers, creasers, chisels, and punchers at least one inch from their sharp or patterned tips. Use these tools in directions away from your body and appendages.
- When using a mallet or maul, strike the head of the tool accurately and firmly to achieve the desired pattern effect, cut, or punch hole. Do not overstrike the tool.
- When not in use, always place a heated electric burner in its tool rest. Disconnect the electric burner from the power source when the burning task is completed.
- Rubber and contact cements produce toxic vapors and should only be used either in well ventilated areas or while using a respirator with organic vapor cartridges.
- Never use bent or broken needles or sewing awls to sew leather.
- Use gloves when applying leather stains. Put a small amount of stain on a cloth or other applicator and recap the stain container before applying the stain to the leather.
- When finished, clean the leatherworking area and put away all tools.
- If you are injured while leatherworking, notify you project leader, parent, or guardian. If a wound is not serious, wash it with soap and water and apply a clean bandage. Seek medical attention if the injury is serious.