MJSA MENTOR & APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Filing Safety Checklist

By Charles Lewton-Brain

- ✓ Regardless of the type of file or rasp used, make sure it has a handle. Do not use a file without a handle—there is too much opportunity for bad puncture wounds.

- ✓ Make sure the file handle has a metal ferrule; this will help prevent snapping.

- ✓ Because needle files are tempered very hard, be careful not to press too firmly on them, particularly on their thinner ends: They can snap and send metal flying into your eyes. To prevent this—as well as to protect your eyes against particles from the material being filed—always wear eye protection.

- ✓ Don't use a file in ways that it wasn't meant to be used. I've seen a wild moment or two when people have used a file in a flexible-shaft machine, or as a chisel or a screwdriver, and had it snap and turn into flying shrapnel.

- ✓ Always be aware of the dangers of the material being filed. Purpleheart wood, for example, can be very toxic. Also, some metal dusts are flammable. Titanium dusts can ignite, for instance, as can aluminum powders when mixed with iron powders.

- ✓ Damp-mop your work area to keep it clean of particles.

- ✓ Be cautious of burning your hand on the workpiece when doing heavy filing. For instance, the friction from filing a piece of drill rod into a chasing tool can heat up the metal to over 650°F (343°C), the blue color on steel. I use a cotton, leather, or Kevlar glove on the hand at the front of the file. A glove helps to protect my hand in case I slip, and it also allows me to better pick up the piece being filed and reposition it.

- ✓ Reamers—those long, tapered cutting tools used to enlarge holes—are usually tempered only slightly and are thus brittle and can snap easily. Since sharp, pointed reamer bits are dangerous when flying about, wear eye protection always.