



Polishing Safety Checklist

By Charles Lewton-Brain

- ✓ Beware of dusts and mists caused by abrasives and their binders. Tripoli may contain cristobolite, which can cause the lung disease silicosis, and binders may promote dermatitis.
- ✓ Never wear gloves; if they're loose, they could get caught by the wheel and your hand could be sucked into the machine.
- ✓ Avoid loose clothing (don't wear a tie while polishing), and keep long hair tied back.
- ✓ Always wear eye protection. A face shield is a good idea as well.
- ✓ Have a soft pad below the polishing buff to prevent items caught on the wheel from bouncing back at you dangerously.
- ✓ Make sure the dust collection system is appropriate for the metals and abrasives used. The shop's filters and extraction system should be cleaned regularly as recommended by the manufacturer. Damp-wipe and mop the polishing area to keep dust down.
- ✓ Avoid polishing compounds containing silica, as well as gasoline, kerosene, and other degreasing solvents. To prevent dry, cracked, or chapped hands, the best solution may be to use either a silicone-based hand cream or those old standbys, petroleum jelly and mineral oil. I personally use a barrier cream on my hands and face, throat, and forehead if I am working with copper and its attendant copper oxides. Several versions, including Kerodex and Prevex, are available at most drugstores.
- ✓ Several people I know have recommended "citrus hand cleaners" instead of harsher solvents for removing polishing residues from the hands. Another method is to rub your hands with a vegetable-based cooking oil to dissolve the grease residues, then wash with mild soap and water.
- ✓ No chains should be taken to the buffing machine without specific hands-on instructions from the mentor.