Sawing Safety Checklist

By Charles Lewton-Brain

- ✓ The worst types of sawing-related injuries tend to occur when a blade snaps and the jagged stub is thrust into the jeweler's fingers. To avoid this, don't saw too fast or violently, and never put your fingers in the path of the saw (this is the bitter voice of experience talking).

- ✓ Lubricate your blade with a wax. Water works as a lubricant when sawing plastic.

- ✓ Blades have blinded people upon breaking, so eye protection should be worn.

- ✓ It is rare for a jeweler's saw frame to break, but I have seen it happen. Make sure the frame is in good condition, that all nuts and tightening parts are working, that the blade is sharp and secure, and that the handle is on tightly–I've seen them fly off suddenly as well.

- ✓ Make sure your V-board or bench pin can't slip or move about. Some people put silicone caulking onto the pin to reduce the chance of slipping.

- ✓ Use a vise or other clamping device to hold the piece you're cutting. Make sure that your metal is well secured, and that it cannot suddenly shift during the sawing process.

- ✓ Use gloves to hold sharp sheet-metal edges while cutting. Watch out that the ends of the grips on hand shears do not pinch the palm of the hand; most goldsmiths have had a bad run-in with hand shears–some of these tools can tear a great divot of flesh from a palm. Make sure they are sharp and tight to avoid burred edges on the metal, which can cause severe cuts.

- ✓ Employ good lighting: I use two light sources, one lamp on each side of the bench, to eliminate shadows.