



## WORKING SAFELY IN THE REPAIR CAFÉ

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## Acknowledgements

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## Safety and Liability

In this document you will find a number of tips and hints that can help create a safe working environment within your Repair Café. Because the rule of thumb when working anywhere is: safety comes first!

In addition, establishing a safe working environment is of importance regarding issues of liability. As the organiser of a Repair Café, you should be able to demonstrate that you've taken all reasonable efforts to create a safe working environment. Try to assess the abilities of the volunteers, by teaming new people with other experienced volunteers with proven capabilities. It's also of importance to continually remind people of the safety instructions. Therefore, you shouldn't just simply hand this document over to the volunteers, but remind them of its contents by re-sending it every three months, or by handing out hard copies on a regular basis. This will allow you to demonstrate that you've taken the necessary steps to establish a safe working environment in your Repair Café.



**Unsafe:** loose extension cords

## Workplace

- **Sufficient lighting**

The right amount of light makes for a safe and comfortable working place, allowing people to clearly see what they're doing. Desk lamps allow for sufficient light. Try to ensure that every volunteer has his/her own lamp.

- **Sufficient working space**

It's important that the volunteers have enough space to work. This prevents people getting irritated or frustrated which in turn creates a safer working environment.

- **Clean floor**

A clean and non-slippery floor is of the utmost importance. Clear away any tools directly after use. In case of sawing or filing: Immediately clean up any shavings or sawdust in order to avoid people slipping or stumbling.

- **Extensions cords**

It's important to have a sufficient number of safe extension cords available, preferably equipped with a separate fuse and off-switch. Cables should not be left lying about. Try to use outlets from the ceiling or wall. And fixate any cables running across the floor with tape or cable conducts. Thin rubber mats can also be used to cover loose cables. These are available on the Internet by the yard. Making purchases together with another Repair Cafe could significantly lower your costs.



**Safe:** extension cords covered with rubber mats



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- **First-aid kit**

Always have your first-aid kit fully stocked and at hand! In addition, it's advisable to always have someone with first-aid training present.



- **Separate current transformer**

Never plug a device that you want to test directly into a power socket, when the device is (partly) directly connected to the mains supply. Always use a separate current transformer. This will protect you against electric shock. A separate current transformer protects against unilateral contact (contact with *one* body part) with live parts. Various Repair Café organisers have made a separate current transformer themselves. You can find how to do this, for example, on the Internet. Please beware of the following:

- The capacity of the separate current transformer needs to be large enough to allow devices to be connected to it;
- Only one device may be connected to the separate current transformer;
- Devices that are connected to the separate current transformer must not be grounded; the socket on the transformer may therefore not have an earth connection;
- The residual-current device (RCD) of the group to which the separate current transformer is connected does not work for incidents that take place *after* the transformer.

- **Open fire**

Never work with, or in the vicinity, of an open fire.

- **Table**

A stable table is of the utmost importance!

The tabletop needs to be clean, flat and preferably made of a non-conductive material, while allowing for sufficient working space. Another tip, which doesn't directly concern safety, but is very handy, is to place (magnetic) trays on the table so you can put screws and/or other parts of the object you're repairing in order to avoid mislaying them.

- **Emergency exits**

Make sure that all exits are kept clear in case of an emergency evacuation in case of fire or another calamity. For instance, check that floor surfaces are clear of tools and that aisles aren't obstructed by furniture or other obstacles. There should be a clearly visible evacuation plan in every room!



*Whenever you enter a Repair Café, first establish where the emergency exits are located*



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## Tools

- **Plenty of tools**

Sufficient and adequate tools will not only increase the productivity but will also increase safety.

- **Safe tools**

Check whether the available tools are in good working order. Sharp edges should be sharpened, straight parts should be straight. A blunt saw can easily slip, which could have dangerous consequences.

- **Storage**

Store the tools correctly after use. Loose tools could form an obstacle in case of an emergency! In addition, it's far easier to work with tools that are easy to find because they're in their set place.



- **Hot appliances**

Be careful with tools and appliances that generate and/or retain heat, such as soldering irons or toasters. Never leave these tools and appliances unattended.

## Repairs

- **Use your common sense**

Before you reach for your screwdriver: Think! Is it really necessary to dismantle the whole appliance, or could the power cord be damaged; or might the hose of the vacuum cleaner simply be blocked?

- **When in doubt: don't!**

If you question the safety of an appliance: stay away from it. You can always ask for assistance from another volunteer, who may have more experience. Nobody will benefit from the fact that you've electrocuted yourself by being careless. Whenever you suspect that the use of an appliance might be unsafe you should clearly explain this to its user.

- **Ask for assistance**

Never, ever hesitate to ask for help when you can't handle something on your own. Don't grip any objects between your knees or chin and shoulder, but ask someone to hold it for you.

- **Dangerous appliances**

It's better to avoid some appliances, such as old-style CRT-television sets and microwave ovens. Even unplugged, these appliances may retain extremely high levels of electric power.

- **Power plugs**

Only consider repairs on an electric appliance when the power cords and plugs are in good order.

- **Unplug it**

Even if it may sound a bit too obvious: Always check if an appliance is disconnected from its power supply before you start tinkering with it.

- **Testing**

Keep a safe distance when testing an appliance for the first time after repairs.

- **Skin protection**

Avoid any skin contact with dangerous substances, including aggressive types of glue. If necessary, use protective gloves.



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*Toss it? No way!*

