



# POLICY STATEMENT

## FOR THE USE OF MECHANICAL TOOLS

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY  
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By motion of the Board of Architectural Review at the June 13, 2007 meeting, the following guidelines were adopted concerning the use of mechanical tools in the rehabilitation of historic properties where under the purview of the B.A.R.:

1. **Paint Removal:** As described in the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, paint removal from historic buildings—with the exception of cleaning, light scraping, and hand sanding as part of routine maintenance—should be avoided unless absolutely essential.

Where paint must be removed, abrasive measures using mechanical means such as rotary drill attachments (disk sanders, wire strippers, etc.), belt sanders, waterblasting, and sandblasting are strongly discouraged, as these tools have the clear potential to damage historic fabric and are largely unnecessary. Orbital sanders may be used, provided no damage occurs.

2. **Mortar Removal:** Generally speaking, mortar that has substantially failed to the point of requiring repointing typically requires minimal effort for removal and/or may have already been displaced.

Where mortar is deemed necessary for removal, mechanical tools such as electric chisels, rotary drill attachments, etc., are strongly discouraged. Similar to above, these tools can cause irreparable harm to historic masonry.

The above criteria are intended as general guidelines in order to discourage the use of the mechanical tools, and apply to other materials and locations in rehabilitation and renovation work where historic fabric is present.

**Any damage to historic fabric through the use of the tools, such as gouging, pitting, circular depressions, cutting of brick, etc.—WILL RESULT IN THE ISSUANCE OF AN IMMEDIATE STOP WORK ORDER, and the building permit will be revoked. In many cases, a Municipal Summons will be issued, requiring appearance before Livability Court, and may result in a fine and/or incarceration. Work will not be allowed to commence until any damage is repaired, reviewed and approved by the B.A.R.**

This policy statement was approved by resolution by the Board of Architectural Review on June 13, 2007.