



Hand Safety

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Two of the most intricately designed instruments that we work with are our hands. We probably couldn't use any other devices that can take the beatings our hands take and still turn out precision maneuvers. Like most things of marvel, we have come to take our hands for granted--except when we get our fingers pinched in a door or between two bowling balls. Then we remember that our hands are not only present but sensitive, too. Unfortunately, we soon forget this experience and start taking them for granted again.

Hand protection isn't anything new. It's been considered important for years. In medieval times, knights wore armored gauntlet gloves. Later, the bare-knuckled prize fighters discovered it was easier on both parties involved if their hands were covered when they squared off. And as the game of baseball developed, the fielder's gloves evolved from a skimpy piece of leather into something with considerably more padding.

It might surprise you to know that hand injuries account for one third of the two million disabling on-the-job accidents which occur each year. Most of these hand injuries are caused by pinch points--80 per cent of them, in fact. Pinch points have the nasty habit of catching us when we aren't looking, or more appropriately stated, when we are not paying attention. Pinch points can be avoided by being aware of their existence and then taking the proper precautions. Pulleys and belts can form in-running nips, a type of pinch points that can draw in a hand and cause severe damage. In-running nips should be covered with guards. Never wear gloves around in-running nips. The glove can be caught and the hand pulled into harms way.

Another precaution to take for hand protection is to wear approved work gloves when handling rough materials and during other operations where your hands are directly involved in the lifting or moving of objects. Still other safety measures include taking time to remove or bend down protruding nails, splinters, and sharp edges on materials you are going to be working with.

Of course, machine guards and the special tools given you to perform your job should be utilized. When you don't lock out machinery which you have to reach into, or when you remove a guard and don't replace it, you're positively shortening the odds that you'll be injured, and any bet you make against yourself is a poor one.

Minor scrapes and cuts on your hands happen every day. However, a little foresight will go a long way toward avoiding these minor but annoying injuries. For instance, if you are moving an object, either on a hand truck or carrying it, make sure the doorways and aisles are wide enough to move through safely before starting the job. Make sure that you have proper hand clearance and be equally cautious when setting down your load. And if you do get a scrape or cut, make sure that it doesn't develop into anything serious. Keep it clean, dry, and if need be, covered. At the first sign of any problem such as an infection, notify your supervisor.

It's advisable to keep your hands free of grease and oil. Slippery hands can get you into trouble, so if you get grease on them, clean them up right away.

We've probably all joked at some time or another that our troubles began when we put on a wedding band. This could actually be the truth in reference to our jobs. For safety's sake, don't wear rings while you're working. They can very easily catch on machinery and other objects, resulting in a badly cut finger or worse.

If it should become necessary for you to pick up broken glass, nails or other sharp objects, wear gloves for the job or sweep it up. Never attempt to handle these things with your bare hands.

A good thing to always keep in mind is that your hands are fearless. They'll go anyplace they are sent and they will act only as wisely as the person they belong to.

REMINDERS

- ☞ Pay attention to your work.
- ☞ Keep an eye out for pinch points and in-running nips.
- ☞ Keep guards in place on pinch points.
- ☞ Have minor cuts and scratches treated to prevent infections.
- ☞ Wear gloves to avoid splinters and cuts; DON'T wear gloves around in-running nips.
- ☞ Keep hands free of oil or grease.
- ☞ Don't wear rings if you work around machinery.