



Hand Safety

The hands and fingers are the most often injured parts of the body. There are few work activities which do not involve the hands. The potential for injury is always there and we must be constantly aware to avoid hazards and injury.

The primary way to avoid injury is to ensure that hands are kept out of the "danger zone" while a work task is performed. The "danger zone" is the space surrounding equipment or machinery where a worker may be struck by or caught between moving parts, moving and stationary parts, material and moving parts; burned by steam or hot surfaces; or exposed to electric shock. It is the employer's responsibility to evaluate each work task and ensure that it is being performed in the safest manner possible. You must also do your part to avoid accidents.

Your responsibilities in keeping your hands out of the "danger zone" include:

1. Maintain good hand position to avoid hazards. You must be constantly alert to where your hands are positioned. Pay special attention to the placement of your non-dominant hand. Do not position your hands where:
 - a. They can be cut or punctured
 - b. They can be burned by hot objects or chemicals
 - c. They can be pinched between objects
 - d. They can be struck by objects that move because of pent up energy that can be released unexpectedly if not maintained under control (for example, energy stored in compressed springs, hydraulic fluids under pressure, arm energy, etc.)
2. Follow directions on how to perform a work task. If you do not know for sure how to do the task, ask your supervisor for instruction and/or assistance.
3. Use the correct tools for the job and ensure those tools are in good condition.
4. Make sure machine guards are in place for all moving machinery. Never remove machine safeguards.
5. Check materials and equipment for rough or sharp edges before handling.
6. Maintain an effective barrier between hands and hazards by using tools or other aids.
7. Maintain good housekeeping in the work area.
8. Adhere to lockout/tag out procedures. Determine if there are multiple energy sources present in the same equipment and ensure that all sources are addressed (for example, bleed off stored energy in cylinders, receivers, pipelines)
9. Do not wear loose clothing or jewelry around moving machinery.
10. Keep hands from under suspended loads.
11. When applying force (push or pull), be prepared for an unexpected slip or release.

In addition to keeping your hands out of the "danger zone," you should use appropriate hand protection that is specific to the job being performed. Each specific hazard will have gloves that are designed to protect against that hazard. Ensure that your gloves are sized properly and are in good condition. Most importantly, wear your gloves on a regular basis as you perform your work tasks.

Employers must select and require workers to use appropriate hand protection when workers' hands are exposed to hazards, such as absorption of harmful substances, severe cuts, lacerations, or abrasions, punctures, chemical or thermal burns, and harmful temperature extremes. Employers must select the appropriate hand protection based on the specific conditions and potential hazards of the tasks.

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