

*"For safety's sake—do something."*

## Hand Safety and Injury Prevention

Healthy hands are needed for just about every job and to get through daily life comfortably. We use our hands for virtually every task we do at work. Because of this fact, they are commonly injured on the job. Keeping our hands and fingers out of harm's way at work is critical. A serious injury to an individual's hands or fingers results in a huge negative impact on their ability to work and overall quality of life. While gloves are the most common form of PPE found in the workplace, hand injuries are still one of the leading types of injury on the job.

### Hand Injury Statistics (source: www.bls.gov)

- There are 110,000 lost time cases due to hand injuries annually.
- One million workers are treated in an ER for hand injuries annually.
- Seventy percent of workers who experienced a hand injury were not wearing gloves.
- Another 30% of victims had gloves on, but they were damaged or inadequate for the work task.

### Safe Work Practices

- Use tools to remove your hands from the line of fire when doing a work task that could result in injury to your hands or fingers. Using tools such as push sticks when using a table saw is an example that removes your hands from the line of fire.
- Avoid using fixed open blade knives. There are safety knives that limit the length of the blade exposed. They also have a safety feature that retracts the blade when pressure is let off the handle or switch that controls the blade.
- Never put your hand in an area where you cannot see it.
- Never work on an energized piece of equipment. Lock and tag out the equipment to ensure there will not be unintentional start up while you are working on the equipment.

### Three Common Types of Hand Injuries

- Lacerations are the most common type of hand injuries. Lacerations are due to sharp objects or tools. Often inadequate gloves are used during an activity that involves a sharp tool. A cut resistant glove is effective in protecting the hand against a cutting or slicing motion. A straight stab motion can still easily penetrate these gloves. Caution needs to be used when using any tool that can easily penetrate the skin.
- Crush injuries are usually due to employees placing their hands in the line of fire, between two objects or in a rotating piece of equipment. Pinch points on equipment or tools also commonly lead to crush injuries.
- Fractures occur when there is a sudden blow to the bones in the fingers or hands. Another common cause of fractures is an individual getting their fingers or hands caught in or on an object such as strut material while trying to maneuver their bodies.

Leather Gloves	Cut Resistant Gloves	Electrical Gloves	Chemical Gloves
Protects against abrasions	Protects against cuts	Required for electrical work	Required for handling chemicals
			

#### Discussion points:

What are some of the biggest hazards to our hands on-site?

Next time you are doing a simple task at home (i.e. setting the table for dinner, getting ready in the morning, or cleaning) try doing the task with one or two fewer fingers. This can help put into perspective how hard it would be to complete tasks without some of our fingers. It is easy to take for granted our health and abilities.