

Hand Injury Prevention

Hand injuries account for a major portion of on-the-job accidents. Each year, more than 1,000,000 U.S. workers receive treatment in emergency departments for acute hand injuries. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that approximately 110,000 workers with hand and finger injuries lose days away from work annually—second only to back strain and sprain.

- Distractions or being rushed
- Complacency in the job
- Poor tools or equipment
- Change in normal work method
- Failure to realize the potential for harm from a machine or tool
- Failure to lockout a machine before performing maintenance, service, clear a jam, or cleaning it
- Inexperience or lack of training
- Impairment from drugs or alcohol

Employees can do several things to help prevent an injury to a hand:

- ✓ Always pay attention to the task or job
- ✓ Do not become complacent
- ✓ Be aware of all hazardous areas on a machine or tool or equipment, i.e. knives
- ✓ Be aware of pinch points
- ✓ Use proper type of gloves to protect hands from hazards
- ✓ Use machine guards and make sure they are functional
- ✓ Inform supervisors about faulty tools or equipment
- ✓ LOCKOUT machines and equipment
- ✓ Be aware of the placement of your hands before activating a machine, using a hand tool, etc.
- ✓ Store sharp tools where they cannot cause cuts. Do not store knives in drawers and never just leave a knife lying around
- ✓ Use the right tool for the job and use it correctly. Inspect the tool before each use. If you find anything wrong such as a loose handle, put it aside and mark it for replacement or repair
- ✓ Maintain machines and tools according to the manufacturer's instructions



Other hand safety issues:

- Keep your hands clean. Wash them as often as required to remove dirt, grease, and chemicals. Use moisturizer to replace the skin's natural oils lost by washing or by chemical contact. Never use a solvent to clean your hands. Solvents strip away the natural oils and can cause severe irritation
- Get first aid for all hand injuries. Minor cuts have a way of escalating into major infections

No matter what type of a workplace you are in or what kind of work you do, your hands are exposed to many hazards. Pay attention to what you are doing to keep your hands safe.

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