

Hand Safety

Avoiding Finger, Hand and Wrist Injuries



our hands are two of your most important “instruments.” Yet, many warehouse workers suffer serious (and often disabling) hand injuries each year. By recognizing hand hazards, following established safety guidelines and using protective guards, shields, gloves and other personal protective devices as needed, you can save your hands from injury and yourself from an unnecessary disability.

Recognizing Hand Hazards

One of the most serious yet common causes of hand injuries is the use of unprotected or faulty machinery or equipment, such as roll-bar conveyor systems, electric staple guns or simple carton cutters. Failure to use push-sticks, guards, kill-switches or appropriate lockout procedures are among the leading warehouse hand hazards.

Wearing jewelry, loose-fitting gloves or loose-fitting clothing around moving parts can also lead to injury. Chemicals, corrosives and other irritating substances can cause burns and skin inflammation unless appropriate hand protection is used. Temperature extremes and electrical hazards are other common causes of hand injuries.

In addition, constant, repetitive motions (as in lifting or filing) can cause undue stress on the wrists and hands unless protective measures are taken. The following guidelines can help you protect your hands from injury and disability.

Hand Protection Checklist

- ☞ Be alert to potential hand hazards *before* an accident can happen.
- ☞ Be alert to possible unguarded pinch points.
- ☞ Always use push-sticks, guards, shields and other protective devices when appropriate. Do not remove guards.
- ☞ Use brushes to wipe away debris.
- ☞ Inspect equipment and machinery before and after tasks to make sure that they are in good operating condition.
- ☞ Disconnect the power and follow established lockout procedures before repairing or cleaning machinery.
- ☞ Never wear loose gloves, jewelry or loose clothing when working with moving machine parts.
- ☞ Use personal protective equipment—gloves, guards, forearm cuffs, barrier creams—appropriate to the specific task you are performing.
- ☞ When wearing gloves, be sure they fit properly and are rated for the specific task you are performing.
- ☞ Select tools designed to keep wrists straight to help avoid repetitive motion/overuse problems.