Hand Safety

Avoiding Finger, Hand, and Wrist Injuries

Whether you're a machine operator, a lab technician, an office worker--any kind of worker, for that matter--your hands are one of your most important "instruments." Yet, over a quarter of a million people 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 unnecessary disability.

Recognizing Hand Hazards

One of the most serious yet common causes of hand injury is the use of unprotected or faulty machinery or equipment. Failure to use push-sticks, guards, kill-switches, or to follow appropriate lock-out procedures are among the leading industrial hand hazards. Wearing jewelry, 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 motion (as in assembly-line work or painting) can cause undue stress on the wrists and hands unless protective measures are taken. The following list provides a guideline for hand safety that can help you protect your hands from injury and disability.

Hand Protection Checklist

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

Safety Meeting Sign-In

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Kelley Integrity Safety Solutions, LLC