



PLAYING IT **SAFE**

How to Protect Hands, Wrists and Fingers

Helpful tips for reducing your risk of injury at work

A recent study funded by the Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR) found that fingers and hands are the most injured body parts among construction workers, accounting for a third of all emergency room visits. Injuries can be not only extremely painful, but also debilitating. An occupational injury causes initial pain and can require weeks or months of rehabilitation.

Hazards

Throughout the day, your hands come in contact with a multitude of hazards such as heavy or fast-moving machine parts, sharp tools and corrosive chemicals. Other hand, wrist and finger hazards you might face on the job every day include:

- Cutting tools operating at high speeds
- Heavy machinery
- Extreme temperatures
- Pinch points
- Equipment without machine guards
- Wearing clothing that can get caught in a machine

Precautions

To avoid suffering from a hand, wrist or finger injury, you must learn how to recognize potential hazards and then take the proper steps to avoid them. Consider the following recommendations while on the job:

- Develop a "safety first" attitude and take time to familiarize yourself with the hazards in your working environment. Become familiar with

all equipment and know what others are doing around you.

- Concentrate on the task at hand, even when you're frustrated or when there are distractions.
- Use common sense and remain alert for unexpected problems. Be wary of possible hazards.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is designed to shield your body from hazards. Since the hands, wrists and fingers are so susceptible to injuries, there are many varieties of PPE to choose from.

- Select appropriate gloves. Make sure they are long enough to cover your wrists and fit correctly. Gloves that are too big can get caught in machinery, and gloves that are too small wear out easily.
- Leather gloves provide protection from bruises, cuts and minor burns. Cut-resistant gloves offer shielding from sharp-edged tools. Heat-resistant gloves offer protection against burns. Rubber, vinyl or neoprene gloves shield hands from corrosive materials.
- Barrier creams applied to the skin provide an invisible protective coating against minor irritations.
- Guards or hand pads protect against heat and abrasive materials.
- Finger guards protect against pinch hazards.



Keep the Gloves On!

According to the National Safety Council, cuts/scrapes and puncture hand injuries cost employers over \$11,000 in claims and lost time. The study also found that 70 percent of workers who suffered injuries were not wearing gloves.