



Hand Safety

Your Hard Working Hands

Consider this important fact: Your hands are the most convenient tool you have for accomplishing a wide variety of jobs. It's up to you to keep your hands strong and healthy.

But ... You Are Not Alone: OSHA requires the use of appropriate hand protection when there is a high risk of injuries as a result of skin absorption, severe cuts or lacerations, severe abrasions, punctures, chemical burns, electrical shock or harmful temperature extremes.

Protect Your Hands With Gloves

Work gloves are available in a wide variety of materials. Which type should you choose?

There are **four basic categories** of gloves: durable work gloves, fabric gloves, chemical and liquid-resistant gloves, and insulating rubber gloves.

General rule: Select gloves based upon the protection they provide for each particular job hazard.

Fabric gloves provide some protection against dirt, slivers and abrasions. These gloves do not offer slip resistance and could cause you to drop items.

Durable work gloves are made from leather, canvas, metal mesh or synthetic fibers. They protect against lacerations, burns and sustained heat. They are not chemical-resistant or electrically insulating. When wet, their heat-resistant properties are reduced.

Chemical and liquid-resistant gloves protect workers from chemical burns, irritation and dermatitis caused by contact with greases, acids, oils, solvents or other chemicals. **Possible problem:** Some people experience an allergic reaction to the latex used in this type of gloves. **Important:** Consider the type of chemical being used in determining what material your gloves should be.

Insulated rubber gloves are the gloves of choice for telecommunications and electrical utility workers. They are made of durable rubber material but can be damaged due to job hazards. They should be replaced once damaged by a hole, puncture or embedded foreign object.



Danger Is Everywhere

Hand injuries can occur from pinch points in machine guards, conveyor belts, rolling belts, hand tools and power tools, chemical spills, extreme cold or hot temperatures and fatigue.

What Is A Correct Fit?

Gloves are just like shoes. You have to try before you buy. If the gloves are too small, they'll constrict hand movement, causing your hands to tire sooner. If the gloves are too large, they'll be clumsy to work with.

Select gloves that allow you to identify objects by touch without looking at them, pick up small objects successfully, and hold heavy objects while moving your arm in different positions.

Use And Care of Gloves

Just as you'd take care of a baseball mitt, your gloves need careful attention.

- Always inspect your gloves before wearing them. Look for cuts, tears and punctures.
- Don't wear damaged or defective gloves; they won't provide the proper protection.
- Replace ineffective gloves immediately. Remember, your hands are worth the extra effort.

Vibration Hazards Are Not New

Unknown and unrecognized for many years, occupational vibration affects up to 2 million workers. Grinders, drills, jack hammers, riveting guns, impact wrenches, chainsaws, powered hammers, chisels and sanders are just some of the tools that can cause a condition known as hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS).

Other terms associated with HAVS are Raynaud's syndrome, "dead hand" or "vibration white fingers." Symptoms include numbness, pain, white fingers (blanching), loss of finger dexterity or discomfort and pain in the upper limbs. Cold temperatures worsen symptoms.

Occupational vibration can be controlled by wearing anti-vibration gloves at all times, keeping the hands warm and dry, using an alternative or lower-vibration tool if possible, having modified work breaks or rotating between high-vibration and low-vibration jobs.

REPETITION: Not Always a Good Thing

Carpal tunnel syndrome, a repetitive stress injury, is a growing problem. But you can take steps to prevent this medical problem.

REDUCE awkward wrist positions and repetitive hand movements as much as possible.

VARY tasks as much as possible and take adequate breaks to move your hands out of a certain position.

LOOK for hand tools or tool handles that don't cause as much vibration or allow you to hold your wrist in a natural position while working.

Skin Care is For Everyone

Occupational skin diseases are common in industrial workplaces, due to heavy dirt and grease or contact with harsh chemicals. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, allergic and irritant (contact) dermatitis are the second most common occupational malady.

Good hygiene during work is the first line of defense to prevent skin irritants and illness.

Successful Handwashing

- Apply a mild cleanser.
- Lather thoroughly. Scrub hands and forearms for at least 15 seconds or until clean.
- Use a nailbrush.
- Rinse thoroughly.
- Dry hands completely with a paper towel to prevent dermatitis.
- Use a hand cream after washing during the day and at night to restore the skin's natural oils.

DON'T use excessively hot or cold water. Hot water dries the skin and removes the dirt no faster than warm water. Cold water prevents soap from lathering properly so dirt, grime and germs aren't washed away.

Watch That Knife!

The next time you're using a knife in the kitchen or workshop, avoid becoming a statistic. Knife cuts or punctures are the fifth leading cause of injuries treated in hospital emergency departments. Grip firmly, cut away from you and keep all blades sharp. Dull blades tend to slip and pose a greater hazard.

