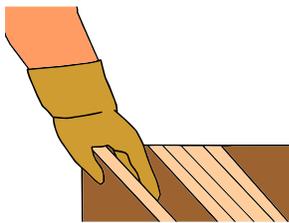


“Hand Safety Tips”

Why It Matters:

- ☞ There are about 250,000 serious hand, finger, and wrist injuries in private industry per year, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.
- ☞ In a recent year, about 8,000 of these injuries were amputations.
- ☞ In FY 2004, OSHA issued more than 1,000 citations for violations of the “General Requirements” section of its PPE standard (29 CFR 1910.132)..



Ignorance isn't bliss. When OSHA revised its Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) standard in 1994, it included a new rule on hand safety (29 CFR 1910.138). There were two main reasons for revising the overall PPE rule: Too many employees were not wearing PPE, and too many employees who did wear PPE were either using the wrong PPE or using it incorrectly. Regarding hand injuries specifically, one study showed that 70 percent of injured workers did not wear gloves, and the remaining 30 percent wore gloves that were inadequate, damaged, or wrong for the type of hazard being protected against. OSHA

therefore concluded that it simply wasn't enough for employers to require employees to wear PPE – the employer needed to select PPE on the basis of the specific conditions and potential hazards of the task to be performed.

Have employees conduct their own hazard assessment for hand safety. OSHA requires employers to determine the types of PPE to be required by assessing the workplace for hazards. Involving employees in this hazard assessment can be an effective training technique. On the topic of hand safety, ask them to list all the ways their hands might be injured on the job. Depending on the jobs done in your workplace, the list might include:

- Cuts, lacerations, punctures, and even amputations
- Abrasions from rough surfaces
- Broken fingers or other bones of the hand
- Chemical burns
- Severe skin irritation(dermatitis) from contact with certain chemicals
- Thermal burns from touching very hot objects
- Absorption of hazardous substances through unprotected skin

Choose the right gloves for the job. Of course, wearing gloves will help protect against many of the hazards listed above. But not just any kind of glove will do. As another training exercise, have employees match the hazards they've identified with the right kind of glove, and ask them to explain why certain types of gloves are or are not appropriate for certain hazards. (For example, use rubber rather than cotton gloves for handling hazardous liquids because rubber repels liquids, while cotton absorbs them.). And for hand injuries that generally are not prevented by gloves (lacerations, broken bones, amputations), remember to include training on safe ways to use hand tools, power tools, machinery, and other typical causes of serious hand injuries.