

# Safety Bugle

## Today's Topic: Hand Safety



### Introduction

You probably take your hands for granted until you have an injury. Then you'll know just how difficult life can be without the full use of your hands. There are a wide variety of safety hazards that can injure your hands.



### Hazards

The following are some of the different workplace hazards can cause hand injury:

- Equipment that cuts and crushes materials can also mangle hands.
- There are rough surfaces which can scrape the skin.
- Hot and cold materials can cause thermal burns.
- Chemicals can corrode the skin or enter the body through the skin and cause poisoning.
- Infectious materials can cause disease.
- Electrical current, which contacts the skin, can cause fatal shocks.

In addition, there are certain injuries that can develop over time. These include:

- Injury caused by repetitive strain or by repeated impact or vibration.
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a common example of such an injury. It occurs when the worker performs the same hand motions for extended periods of time, as in the case of a computer keyboard operator or an assembly worker.

### To Prevent Injury

To prevent accidental contact injury to your hands while working, the most important action is the selection of the correct personal protective equipment. Gloves made of different materials protect against different hazards.

- **Leather gloves** can help protect against scrapes and splinters.

- **Gloves and sleeves with a metal mesh reinforcement** offer protection against cuts.
- **Special electrical rubber gloves** can provide protection against electrical shock and should be worn around electrical installations.
- **Fabric containing aluminum insulates** against high heat surfaces.
- **Rubber or certain synthetic gloves** can provide protection against certain chemicals. It is important to choose gloves made of the right material for protection against chemicals. The chemical could leak through the wrong material.

In addition to gloves, there are special sleeves, cuffs, mitts and finger guards for certain hazards.

### WHEN NOT to wear Safety Gloves

There are situations when you are working around moving equipment when you should NOT wear gloves, because of the danger of entanglement. For the same reason, you should not wear loose clothing or jewelry, which can also become entangled in machinery.

OTHER things you can do to maintain hand safety on the job:

- Use care when working around equipment with moving parts, as well as any power or hand tools.
- Use machine guarding correctly to prevent contact with moving parts or stock.

To protect against developing injuries:

- Keep your hands and wrists in a comfortable "neutral" position.
- Take frequent short mini-breaks to relax your hands and wrists.
- Take a few seconds during mini breaks to stretch your hands and wrists.
- Use tools that are specially designed to prevent repetitive strain and impact.