

Hand Safety Meeting Kit



What's At Stake

HAND SAFETY

Protecting your fingers and hands is important for work and quality of life. Work-related hand injuries are one of the leading reasons workers end up in the emergency room and miss work. Our hands are one of our most important tools. They're precise and incredibly versatile. They're also quite vulnerable. Because they're at the center of all the work we do, our hands are at high risk of injury.

What's the Danger

Top 10 Hazards to Your Hands

- Pinch Points. A pinch point is any point where hands and fingers can be caught and pinched, such as two objects or the moving parts of a machine.
- Sharp Objects. they introduce a number of hazards, including lacerations, punctures, and even amputation.
- Trips and Falls. These incidents can injure any part of the body, the hands are particularly vulnerable since we instinctively extend them to brace ourselves for the impact of the fall.
- Repetitive Strain Injuries. Carpal tunnel syndrome is the most common repetitive strain injury, affecting more than 8 million people in the United States. The symptoms progress from slight discomfort to severe pain and, eventually, the inability to use the hands.
- Line-of-Fire Hazards. These accidents can be minor, like hitting a thumb with a hammer, or far more serious, like being caught and crushed in a pair of rollers.
- Defective Equipment. Defective tools and equipment can cause serious and painful injuries.
- Rotating/Moving Equipment Hazards. Getting caught in one of these machines can cost a worker their life. Fatal accidents involving these pieces of equipment can start with something seemingly innocuous like a sleeve touching a moving part and pulling someone in.
- Extreme Cold. Extreme cold is a hazard faced by those working outdoors, in workplaces with poor insulation, or in cold facilities such as large walk-in freezers. In these conditions, the extremities, including the fingers and hands, are vulnerable to frostbite, resulting in a loss of feeling in the affected area and potential permanent tissue damage.
- Chemical Hazards. Workers across industries handle chemicals that can cause damage to their hands. Depending on the particular substance, exposure can result in irritation, burns, or other types of injuries
- Negligence. Distraction and loss of concentration can result in negligent

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

PREVENTION – FIVE WAYS

1. Wear PPE. Wearing gloves is non-negotiable when it comes to hand safety. Most hand injuries are preventable with the correct gloves. Some gloves prevent impact injuries, others are for laceration protection, while still others work to guard against chemical burns. Know your gloves and the level of protection they offer. Provide your staff with the types of gloves they need.

Gloves must fit well. A common complaint from workers is that gloves are uncomfortable and impair dexterity. Ill-fitting gloves can cause more risks than they prevent. Make sure gloves fit well and don't inhibit movement.

2. Use Safe, Well-Maintained Equipment and Tools. Making sure your workers have the safest equipment and that it is always in good working order will greatly reduce risks of injury.

Set up a maintenance schedule for equipment and tools. And periodically check to see if there are safer options for the tools and equipment your employees are currently using. Keep up to date on innovations in design and materials to ensure that your workers have access to the safest items on the market.

3. Stretch, Strengthen, and Go Ergo. Many workers are tasked with doing the same types of movements repeatedly, and overuse-strain injuries are common in the workplace. To prevent these types of injuries, workers must be certain not to overtax their hands, wrists, and forearms day in and day out.

4. Be Aware. Awareness is a key component in workplace safety in general. Workers should be mindful of the actual and potential hazards around them. This means no screen time, headphones, or phone calls while performing work.

5. Take Your Time, Be Prepared. Before embarking on any task, your workers need to be sure the area is safe and clear, and that they're following all precautions and protocols.

BEST HAND SAFETY WORK PRACTICES

- Use tools to remove your hands from the line of fire when doing a work task that could result in injury to your hands or fingers. Using tools such as push sticks when using a table saw is an example.
- Avoid using fixed open blade knives. Always use a safety knife that limits the amount of blade that is exposed as well as has a safety feature that can retract the blade when pressure is let off the handle.
- Never put your hand in an area where you can not see it.
- Always wear the proper gloves for the task you are doing.
- Never work on an energized piece of equipment. Lock and tag out the equipment to ensure there will not be an unintentional start-up while you are working on that piece of equipment.

HAND SAFETY DO'S AND DON'TS FOR WORKERS

Do:

- Pay attention to where both hands are placed at all times, especially when working with machinery.
- Wear appropriate gloves to protect against particular hazards.
- Use the right tool for the job, and know how to use tools safely, especially power tools.

- Stretch your hands and fingers from time to time to give tense and tired muscles and tendons a chance to relax.
- Protect your hands when working with chemicals, hot substances, sharp objects.

Don't:

- Don't use hands to feed material into machines.
- Don't wear gloves, jewelry, or long sleeves around rotating machinery.
- Don't use your hands to sweep up wood chips, metal shavings, glass, or other sharp objects.
- Don't use strong solvents or gasoline to clean your hands.
- Don't operate machinery or power tools under the influence of alcohol or drugs, even some prescription drugs.

FINAL WORD

Keeping hands healthy and injury free is simple. It requires consistent attention to protocols but consider the great payoff: Workers maintain healthy hands and avoid painful, frustrating injuries.