

The Job at Hand

Your hands and fingers are the most valuable tools on the job. In construction work, you use them for every job you do. While your hand and fingers are probably the most used part of your body, they are also the most neglected.

The first rule to preventing hand and finger injuries is to pay attention to where you are placing them. Consider how your hands and fingers could be damaged in the situation they've been placed. Is there a possibility they could be scraped, pinched, punctured, caught, crushed or burned?

Focus! Don't let yourself become sidetracked by others workers or activities around you. Before you start any job, be aware of the hazards; think through each task and safety rules.

Although each job you perform may present its own hazards, there are still some basic safety principles you should keep in mind all the time:

- Make sure all shields, guards, and safety locks are in place as they were designed!
- Remember to lockout and blockout!
- Learn how to operate your tools and equipment safely.
- Use the right tool for the job!
- Always keep your tools in good repair.
- Rotate tasks to give your hands and fingers a break.
- Use extra care when handling sharp or pointed tools, like hatchets, chisels, punches, awls, knives, and machine blades.
- Keep hands and fingers away from moving parts of tools or machinery.
- Never use your fingers to fish things out of rotating or reciprocating parts of tools and machinery. (Of course, these should be guarded)
- Never use your hands to stop rotating parts.
- Before lifting a load, check for nails, splinters, screws, metal banding, protrusions or other sharp or pointed objects.
- Watch your fingers and hands when lowering heavy loads; they could get pinched.
- Never put your hands or fingers on loads being moved mechanically.
- Never use your fingers to test the temperatures of gases, liquids, or solids; damage can happen before your reflexes remove your fingers.
- Wear proper fitting gloves when needed or appropriate, but watch that they don't get caught in moving parts.
- Wash your hands.

Even the most cautious worker can still experience a hand or finger injury. It is important to report any injury and get the appropriate first aid or medical attention. Ignoring even a simple cut, bruise or burn may lead to a more serious injury or infection. Using common sense is the most effective safety device; use your head when you use your hands.