



# Hand Safety



How would a person's life be affected if they lost the use of one or both hands? In one word, devastating. Basic life functions such as eating, drinking, bathing and using the bathroom would be difficult if not impossible. If you are still not convinced, the next time you are going to drive a nail, put one hand in your pocket and try to do the job. So what can be done to protect the hands? We should make it a habit to **THINK BEFORE WE REACH** and look for potential hazards such as:

- Pinch points
- Rotating equipment such as shafts, saw blades
- Objects with sharp or rough edges
- Energized electrical circuits
- Sharp hand tools such as knife blades, box cutters, chisels, screw drivers
- Hot or cold objects
- Cutting tools such as shears or knife blades wire ropes and slings
- Hazardous chemicals

**Injuries:** These types of hazards can result in cuts, abrasions, crushing injuries, amputations, burns and contact dermatitis.

**Prevention:** Once the hazards are recognized and understood, adequate precautions can be taken to prevent hand injuries. Select the correct tool for the job, and leave the engineering controls and guards in place. Removing the guard from a power saw or grinder is a set-up for disaster. Engineering controls can include fail-safe controls, two hand switches, interlocks and pressure sensitive mats.

**PPE Selection:** When engineering controls and safe work practices cannot control the hazard, your employer provides proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for your use.

Use the correct glove for the job and make sure it is in good condition and fits properly. Various types of gloves are available to protect against specific hazards. General purpose gloves are made of leather or cotton and protect against cuts, abrasions and temperature extremes. Cut resistant gloves made of wire mesh or synthetic materials are useful when handling sharp objects such as sheet metal or glass. Note: Metal mesh gloves should not be worn if an electrical hazard exists. Chemical resistant gloves are necessary when there is exposure to a hazardous chemical. There is no one chemical resistant glove for all chemicals, so make sure yours is designed for the chemical you are using.

Summary: Hand injuries can be prevented if we make it a habit to **THINK BEFORE WE REACH**.