‘Caught Between’ Hazards

WHAT’S AT STAKE

When you work around machinery, vehicles and anything else that moves, you could be caught in a tight spot and crushed. Every year many workers are killed or seriously injured this way.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Caught between” is the term used to describe these injury and fatality incidents. These words refer to being caught between two moving objects or between a moving object and a stationary object. The result is compression and crushing injuries which can be fatal. The places where these incidents occur are called “pinchpoints.”

EXAMPLE

An example involving two moving objects is getting caught in running machinery – between a chain and sprocket, a set of gears, or rollers on a press. Examples of being caught between a moving object and a stationary object are being crushed between a truck and a loading dock, or slamming a hand in a vehicle door.

Getting caught in a pinchpoint can cause a disabling injury such as a hand mangled beyond repair. When a hand is caught in moving machinery, the entire body can be dragged through the machinery, killing the worker.

“Caught between” injuries can occur in any kind of workplace, but they are particularly a hazard in manufacturing where machines are used to move, press, stamp and cut materials. Heavy equipment used in construction is also a common factor in crushing injuries. In mechanical repair, workers have been crushed by vehicles traveling across the shop floor.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Ensure all machine guards are in place to prevent contact with moving parts, such as gears and rollers.
- Don’t wear loose clothing or jewelry around moving equipment because these can catch on the rotating machine parts and pull you in.
- Carefully follow lockout procedures so equipment cannot be started unintentionally when you are doing adjustments or maintenance. Always test the equipment once it’s locked out to ensure your lockout has worked.
- Observe all precautions to avoid being struck by moving equipment such as forklifts. Never assume the operator can see you. Don’t stand in the path of a vehicle, including one being repaired.

FINAL WORD

“Caught between” hazards come in all sizes. Some are traps which can crush a hand. Others can cause fatal compression injuries to the head or chest. Always be alert to the danger of any kind of pinchpoint.