Protect Your Hands

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Think of it!! What would you do if you were missing a hand or fingers?? Your hands and fingers are crucial to your work every day, including recreational time away from work.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Your hands are used everywhere you go. Your hands are in operation all the time. There are any number of ways your hands can be injured.

Example:

- If you reach into a rotating floor polisher when it can still move, your hand is likely to be injured.
- A fall on an outstretched hand could break its bones or sprain finger muscles or tendons.
- Contact with chemicals or other products could cause a skin condition contact dermatitis. Its severe form can be disabling.
- Dropping a heavy load on hands can crush them.
- Exposing a hand to electricity from a source such as a damaged cord in a vacuum cleaner can give you a fatal shock.
- Hitting knuckles on a doorjamb while moving a cleaning cart will bruise or sprain.
- You could hammer your thumb while doing carpentry repairs.
- Repetitive motions such as scrubbing carried out over a long period of time without rest pauses can damage the major nerve in a hand.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

The main way to protecting your hands is to be aware of what you are doing. In other words, pay attention and be alert to what you

are doing in the moment. Diversion, distractions and inattention can lead to injuries.

Other ways to protect hands:

- Learning safe work habits are also important for protecting your hands. Wear your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The proper type of gloves will protect your hands at home as well as in the workplace. Gloves also come as mitts, but gauntlet-length and in longer versions to protect your full arm, depending on the work you are doing. Materials for hand protection includes rubber, cloth, leather, plastic and metal mesh.
- Use synthetic or rubber gloves to protect against certain chemicals and water. Cloth or leather gloves are not much help on jobs involving liquids, but can give some protection against cold and abrasions.
- Leather gloves give some protection against glass, slivers, sparks, sandpaper and heat, depending on the task.
- Your supervisor can tell you which type or types of hand protection you need. You may wear a barrier cream on your hands under gloves to keep out contaminants and make it easier to clean your hands.
- You should not wear gloves if there is any danger of tangling with a drill press, lathe or any other moving machinery.
- Use the correct tool for the job. Keep machinery and tools well-maintained, and know the safety procedures for everything you do at work and in your shop at home. Always have safety guards in place before you operate machinery.

There are hazards of wearing jewelry:

- Entanglement in moving equipment.
- Burns from the metal with the jewelry contacting a hot surface.
- Electric shock from the metal in the jewelry contacting an electrical source.

So, before you start work, remove any rings, bracelets or watch

that you wear to prevent entanglement.

FINAL WORD

Tidiness is a safety habit. Put tools back in a designated place so you don’t scrape your knuckles later from digging through a cart, box or workbench heaped with tools and parts.