

THE PacificComp TRAINER

HAND INJURIES: CUTS & LACERATIONS

The hand is the part of the body most often injured on the job, and these injuries can be difficult to treat. Your hands have the capability of pinching, grasping, twisting, lifting, holding, and manipulating while doing a wide variety of specialized tasks. By identifying hazards and developing safety measures to overcome them you can reduce the possibility of hand and finger injuries.

Hazards in the Workplace and Prevention of Injuries

A hazard is any condition that may cause injury. Hands are at risk from many workplace hazards. The most typical in offices, food service, and manufacturing are detailed below.

OFFICES: Workers who sit at desks are prone to hand cuts from the simple task of handling paper. Cuts and punctures also occur when using common office supplies without exercising care. Office tools, such as, scissors, staplers, letter openers and staple removers are the common culprits in office hand and finger lacerations.

FOOD SERVICE: Workers in this industry are prone to cuts resulting from the use of knives, band saws, food slicers, blenders, and broken glass.

MANUFACTURING: Production shop workers are the highest risk group for hand injuries. A manufacturing process can include the use of hand tools, such as, saws, razor knives, screwdrivers, saws, planes, and drills, which can cause punctures or cuts. Machine tools, such as, circular saws, band saws, planers, drill presses, lathes, and grinding wheels can also cause hand injuries. Materials used in manufacturing such as sheet metal, metal block, and bar stock are a common source of hand injuries due to sharp edges.

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Protection Guidelines

Here are some guidelines to help reduce the chance of cuts and punctures:

- Be careful when using kitchen knives, scissors, staplers, letter openers, and box openers – any of these items could cause a painful hand injury
- Avoid handling broken glass with bare hands – wear gloves and use a broom and a dust pan
- Place used blades or broken glass in a rigid container for disposal
- Use the appropriate equipment for the job
- Know the tools or equipment you work with – do not use or take shortcuts
- Keep hand tools (knives, scissors) sharp and in good condition
- Keep your hands and fingers away from cutting blade edge and/or point of operation
- Store tools safely when not in use
- Preventive maintenance: inspect machinery on a regular basis and assure that guards are in place before operating
- Remove damaged equipment from service immediately
- Wear correct hand protection, for example, metal mesh glove on non-knife hand when cutting
- Do not hold work in your hand while cutting, using a screwdriver, etc. – the tool, when under pressure, could slip and cut/pierce your hand; work should be flat stable surface and if using power tools, firmly secured
- Use a push stick to feed a circular saw or other power tools, such as, jointers and shapers
- Before starting repair work on power tools or machinery check: *All power off or unplugged? Power bled off? Machine locked out?* Double check by turning the tool on.

Protective Personal Equipment (PPE)

- Protect hands by wearing a “cut resistant” glove on the non-knife hand
- Maintain gloves so that they are in good condition
- Remove damaged gloves from service and replace when necessary
- *Reminder: Cut Resistant gloves are just that: “Cut Resistant” – they are not “Cut Proof” and injuries can still happen*

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Hand Protection Tips

- Gloves should not be worn around moving machines that could catch the glove and pull the hand into the danger area, for example, machines with pulleys or power drives with rotating shafts
- Gloves should be long enough to prevent a gap between the glove and the sleeve
- Do not wear gloves with metal parts around electrical equipment
- Some situations call for protection other than gloves – determine whether barrier creams, finger guards or cots, hand pads or leathers, arm protectors, sleeves or wristlets would do the job better
- A word of caution about wearing rings at work: there is a very small space between the ring and the finger, yet often the ring catches – when the ring is forced off or breaks, it may pull the flesh from the finger or amputate it.