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Protect Your Hands

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Hands and fingers are always close to the action. We seldom realize how important our hands are and how much we use them until an injury occurs. In the workplace there are many occasions where we can injure our hands with cuts, burns, damage from the use of tools or contact with chemicals and solvents.

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In fact, nearly 20 percent of disabling occupational injuries involves fingers and hands-second in frequency only to backs. There are many preventative measures that we can take to protect our hands at work and avoid unnecessary pain and injury. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for hands is one way.

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Gloves offer protection from wood and metal splinters, caustics, acids, electrical burns, chemicals, and many other sources of injury. No type of glove can protect from all hazards. Gloves need to be selected based on the protection they provide for each particular job hazard. Gloves should fit properly. If the gloves are too large, it makes it harder to hold and grip items. If the gloves are too small, it can impede circulation.

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Never wear gloves when you work on machines such as drills, saws, grinders, or other rotating or moving equipment. These types of equipment can catch the glove and pull the hand into danger.

Keep gloves clean and in good condition, and replace them if they are worn out or damaged.

Three common types of gloves that you might use are:

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- Thin disposable latex or nitrile gloves for emptying classroom trashcans and cleaning up blood related spills. These gloves are designed to protect your hands while allowing the maximum amount of dexterity.

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- Thicker rubber (neoprene) gloves should be worn when working with any type of chemical. The thicker gloves offer the maximum amount of protection from chemical exposure. Never wear disposable latex or nitrile gloves alone when working with chemicals. The chemical may deteriorate the glove.

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- When moving heavy material or working with heavy bags of garbage, use leather gloves. You never know when a sharp object will puncture through a plastic bag. Always protect your hands with leather gloves when handling wood materials, metal materials or heavy objects.

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One careless moment can result in a hand injury. Your hands are the most important tools you work with. Take good care of them.

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