



Weekly Safety Meeting

Your Safety Is Our Business®

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Pinch Point Safety

Each year, workers suffer approximately 125,000 caught or crushed injuries that occur when body parts get caught between two objects or entangled with machinery. These hazards are referred to as "pinch points." The physical forces applied to a body part caught in a pinch point can vary and cause injuries ranging from bruises and cuts to amputated body parts and even death.

When you think of the word 'pinch,' would you automatically think of it as something that could cause a disabling injury to your hands, toes, or body? At work, pinch points are those situations where machines, hand tools, and conditions put our hands, feet, and sometimes our entire body in danger. An injury can come from something as small as a pair of pliers, or as large as an excavator. Most tools have, or can cause, pinch points. It might surprise you to know that hand injuries alone account for one third of the millions of disabling on-the-job accidents occurring each year. Most of these hand injuries are caused by pinch points – 80% of them in fact.

You may have worked around a pinch point hazard for some time, but don't ignore them. Eventually, if they are not made safe, someone will get caught in the bite.

So how do we protect ourselves and our fellow workers from pinch points? There are three major things we can do; they are awareness, physical barriers, and personal protective equipment.

Awareness:

All around us are things and activities that can cause us to be injured by pinch points (form placement, tool usage, material handling, etc.). Many cannot be avoided, but if you are constantly alert, you can protect yourself from injuries. Awareness comes in two forms, a common sense alertness of the right thing to do and training in the correct way to do things and use equipment.

Physical Barriers:

In service areas, physical barriers might be anything from the machine guard on your table saw to barricades or warning devices from a running engine. Physical barriers are there to protect you from injury, not prohibit your activity. Guards are important to protect you from direct contact with moving parts, flying chips, kickbacks, and splashing of metal or harmful liquids. Barricades are placed at construction sites to warn you of dangerous situations.

It takes knowledge and insight to properly prepare equipment for maintenance or storage. Blocks are used to prevent equipment from rolling and heavy parts from falling. Never remove them unless you know why they are there and the reason for being there is completed. Always check for fellow workers in harm's way before removing blocks.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

Respecting and using physical barriers and being aware of your surroundings are only half of what you need to do to be safe. Make sure you are always wearing your safety gear and inspect it before each use. Although the last line of defense against a pinch point injury, PPE (proper gloves, footwear) is a necessity to ensure others notice your position and your extremities are protected.



Shortcuts Lead to Danger

Often, pinch-point injuries are the result of workers who are not properly trained, don't realize the dangers of machinery, or take shortcuts to get the work done more quickly, but end up injuring themselves instead. Never perform a task without proper training by taking shortcuts or bypassing procedures; the consequences could be serious.

Common Causes of Injuries from Pinch Points:

- Not paying attention to the location of hands and feet;
- Walking or working in areas with mobile equipment and fixed structures;
- Loose clothing, hair, or jewelry getting caught in rotating parts or equipment;
- Poor condition of equipment and guarding;
- Dropping or carelessly handling materials or suspended loads;
- Not using the proper work procedures or tools; and
- Reaching into moving equipment and machinery.

Safe Practices:

- Make sure all covers and guards are in place.
- De-energize, lockout, and tagout equipment being repaired
- Be on guard on the placement of your hands, fingers, feet, etc.
- Be aware of clearances when working in tight spaces.
- Identify all hazardous places prior to working.
- Wear gloves appropriate for the task, but keep in mind that gloves may cause an additional hazard during some tasks if they get caught in moving parts
- Avoid wearing jewelry and loose fitting clothing that could be caught in moving parts and tie back long hair.

Everyone's Responsibility

The best protection from pinch-point hazards comes not from procedures, but from the personal attention of employers and workers to potential hazards.

- Review the dangers of pinch points and the procedures for working safely on a regular basis.
- Perform frequent, targeted inspections to ensure that guards are not missing and procedures are being followed.
- Reward employees for identifying and reporting hazards and quickly resolve those hazards.

Remember, that it is up to each worker to report unsafe pinch points so that guards can be fabricated or purchased for installation on the equipment. Check your work area for these hazards such as unguarded winch drives, chain drives, belts, augers, etc. Most machinery has some type of a pinch point and the only way to make them safe is by adequate guarding, which prohibits entry of fingers, clothing, or hair.

Safety is everyone's responsibility and should not be learned by accident!!



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