

Hand Safety

Week Number 24 (June 11 - 17)

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this safety talk, participants will be able to:

- *Be familiar with the possible jobsite dangers to the hands.*
- *Be familiar with the different types of gloves available.*

Keeping our hands safe should be a priority for those working in the electrical trade; what would your job be at the jobsite if you permanently damaged your hands? Electrical work is very “hand-intensive” and because of this you are dependent on your hands for your livelihood and they are at risk each and every day. These risks may be as simple as a splinter and as extreme as losing fingers. These risk falls into three categories:

- Mechanical hazards- those hazards that involve machinery like drills, saws, and nail guns. Potential injuries will include cuts, punctures, abrasions or crushing.
- Environmental hazards- will include extreme heat or cold, materials handling and electricity.
- Irritating substances- skin issues like dermatitis can be caused by your hands coming in contact with chemicals or biological organisms, like bacteria, fungi or viruses.

The best way to keep your hands safe is to keep them out of harm’s way. This can be helped by using and keeping machine guards on equipment. they’re there to help protect hands and fingers from moving parts. As with any risk at the jobsite, the use of PPE can help reduce the frequency and severity of hand and finger injuries. Gloves are obviously the most common type of PPE, they help to protect your hands, wrists and sometimes your forearms. There are different types of gloves available and you should use the type that gives the best protection for the task you will be working on.

- Leather gloves are good when handling rough or abrasive materials.
- Rubber, vinyl or neoprene gloves will protect your hands when handling and using caustic chemicals like acids, cleansers or petroleum products.
- Puncture/cut resistant gloves will help reduce the severity or a cut or puncture.
- Rubber gloves- these are designed especially for those that work with electricity. They are made either of natural or synthetic rubber and are rated according to their level of voltage protection. This may include insulating sleeves as well.

Whichever type of glove you use, only wear gloves that fit your hand properly. Proper fit is a matter of safety, not comfort. Gloves that are too large are difficult to work in and run the risk of getting caught in equipment, while too small gloves can cause your hands to tire more quickly. Gloves should be treated and cared for like your other types of PPE; cleaned, inspected, repaired and replaced as necessary.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the categories of potential hand hazards?
- Why are your hands at such risk while you’re at work?
- Which type of glove is best suited for working with electricity?
- You show up for work and realize you’ve forgotten your rubber gloves. What do you do?