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Laceration Hazard and Injury Prevention

Construction sites are some of the most hazardous places to work in the world. Unfortunately, cuts to the hands and fingers account for the majority of laceration injuries on job sites today.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that cuts on hands and fingers result in over 110,000 lost time cases each year. The National Safety Council reports an average direct cost for laceration of the hand injuries account for \$10,000 in company expenses and severed tendons can exceed \$70,000.

How Do Laceration Injuries Happen?

Many job site injuries are preventable if employees follow safety protocols and remain alert.

Laceration injuries are external cuts, tears, etc. that open wounds in the skin and result in bleeding. Severe lacerations commonly involve severed fingers and gravely wounded hands, or deeper cuts into arteries or veins that can have catastrophic results.

Common mistakes that lead to laceration Injuries on the job site include working with:

- Wrong tool for the task
- Dull blades
- Poor lighting
- Clutter and debris near the site.
- Missing or broken safeguards
- Failure to wear PPE.

Proper and Safe Use of Tools:

- Use the right tool for the work at hand.
- Educate team members on the proper use of all cutting and shearing tools.
- All tools and machines should be properly maintained, and all safeguards should be repaired or replaced if damaged.
- Ensure the installed engineering controls are used and sharp components, as well as moving parts, are well guarded at all times.

Stop Using Dull Tools”

Never use dull blades or tools. Dull blades and tools require more force to cut materials. Increasing force while cutting will decrease your control and stability, which increases the likelihood of slips and skips on everything from hand tools to power tools.

Stabilize Materials Being Cut:

Always stabilize materials being cut, bent, drilled, etc. It is tempting to try and hold something in one hand while trying to cut it with a tool in the other.

However, this is a safety shortcut that can go badly. Minimize the number of moving pieces every time you cut anything and stabilize the materials before cutting.

Use partners, clamps, push sticks, sawhorses, tables, vices, and large work surfaces to keep your hands as far away from the cutting tools as possible.

Provide and Use Proper PPE:

Make Personal Protective Equipment available and required.

Your site may require everything from gloves to safety glasses, facemasks, and steel-toed shoes.

PPE is the last line of defense for injury prevention, so it is crucial that PPE be provided and used.

Kevlar gloves or other cut-resistant materials are excellent examples of PPE for your hands when sharp tools and machines are in use.

Store sharp objects and tools safely when not in use.

Secure cutting devices and tools in containers to prevent accidental contact and injury. If the machines have covers to protect them from the elements use them to protect people from their moving parts and cutting edges as well.