

Safety Facts: Hand Protection (PPE)*

Hands are essential for work, yet hand injuries are one of the most common injuries in the workplace.

Hands are injured by dull cutting tools, jagged edges, and sharp objects. Most hand injuries are preventable. Injuries happen when workers are rushed, not wearing PPE, using equipment without guarding, or poor supervision and training.

Why wearing hand protection is important

Effective hand safety training and proper protective equipment are two important factors in preventing these injuries.

Choosing the best hand protection

Complete a workplace hazard assessment and choose controls to reduce the risk of injury:

- Modify machinery
- Install guards or buffers
- Isolate hazards
- Look for alternate materials

Once controls are in place, review PPE to prevent potential hazards that aren't addressed through the steps above.

Types of hand protection (PPE)

General cleaning. For light-duties such as cleaning a worksite, choose cotton and string knit gloves. They will keep your hands clean and provide some basic protection.

Thermal gloves. Both excessive cold and heat can damage hands and cause burns, dry and cracked skin, and loss of fingers. Extreme cold temperatures impede grip, which may create further hazards. Thermal rated, heat resistant gloves are the best protection against thermal hazards.

Mechanical and automotive work. For automotive work, general construction, or heavier equipment handling, choose a leather or synthetic glove to provide more protection.

Gloves for using sharp tools. For work with glass or metal use cut resistant gloves. A Kevlar glove provides cut resistance for activities that need dexterity. For food preparation, a Spectra glove is cut resistant when wet. For advanced cut protection choose a Dyneema glove or a metal, mesh glove.

Chemical gloves. Chemical damage can take years to appear. Hands may be burned, scaly, have chronic skin conditions or even cancer. A barrier glove that does not allow liquid to pass through is the most effective to protect hands from chemicals.

Electrical gloves. Rubberized, insulated electrical gloves are the best option for electrical protection for workers.

Other ways to prevent hand injuries

- Keep tools in good working condition
- Ensure that all tools have proper grips and handles
- Pass and store tools handle first and cover when not in use
- Keep work areas clean
- Only use tools for the job they were made to do



For additional resources visit:

Manufacturing Safety Alliance of BC: safetyalliancebc.ca

