

TOOLBOX TALK: HAND SAFETY

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Look at your hands. Every one of us uses them for everything on this job and none of us plans where they are going to be during the next ten seconds. That is the whole talk.

The talk

Think in terms of the line of fire. Before you do anything, ask where the energy goes if this slips, drops, swings, springs back or closes. Then put your hands outside that path. That one habit prevents more hand injuries than any glove ever made.

Pinch points are the ones that take fingers. Material being set down, a door being hung, sheet goods being stood up, a load being landed, a tailgate, a scissor lift rail, anything with a hinge. The hand goes on the outside face, never in the gap, and never underneath.

Knives are the other half. Most utility knife injuries happen cutting toward the hand holding the material, or with a dull blade that needs more force and then slips. Cut away from yourself, change the blade when it drags, and use a self retracting or hook blade where you can.

Gloves need matching to the hazard. Cut resistant for handling metal, glass and sheet goods. Leather for rough material and heat. Chemical gloves for chemicals, because ordinary gloves absorb and hold solvent against your skin. Impact gloves for demo and anything with a hammer near it.

And the exception that matters: no gloves near rotating equipment. A glove that catches in a drill, a grinder, a saw or a bit pulls the hand into it. That is the one place where bare hands are the safer choice.

Last thing, the small cuts. A cut that seems minor on a job site is a puncture full of concrete dust, rust or treated lumber. Clean it, cover it, report it. Infection is what turns a two day cut into a two week problem.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The pinch points on today's work: hinges, loads landing, sheet goods, tailgates
- The gloves people are wearing, and whether they match the hazard
- Every rotating tool on site, where gloves come off

- Utility knives: blade condition, cutting direction, and whether a hook blade would be safer
- Where hands are going to be during the riskiest lift or set today
- The first aid kit, where it is and whether it has anything left in it

The rules that apply

- Identify the line of fire before every task and keep hands out of it.
- Never place a hand under a load, inside a gap that can close, or between material and a fixed object.
- Match the glove to the hazard: cut resistant, leather, chemical or impact.
- No gloves near rotating tools, bits or wheels where the glove can be caught and pull the hand in.
- Cut away from your body with a sharp blade, and retract or sheath the blade the moment you finish.
- Report and treat every cut and puncture, however small. Infection is the usual complication.

Ask the crew

- On today's work, where is the pinch point nobody has mentioned yet?
- Who is wearing gloves near a rotating tool today?
- When did anybody last change a utility knife blade instead of pushing harder?

Close with this

Know where the energy goes and keep your hands out of it. Right glove for the hazard, no gloves near anything spinning.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.