

Material Handling and Hand Safety

Sharp Edges and Puncture Hazards

When you are handling metal, remember the sharp rolled edges. Many hand lacerations are caused by carelessness - losing your grip and not wearing gloves (PPE) when stocking, installing, or cleaning up. Always use gloves when handling any kind of metal. Keep in mind the screws used to install the metal and drywall have sharp points can puncture your hands and fingers.

Mechanical Pinching Hazards

These are present when you use machinery and power tools. Never allow alteration or removal of machine guards on equipment that protects your hands and fingers from moving parts. Examples include chop-saw or miter saw blade guards and covers for mechanical parts on lifts.

Crushing Hazards

Dense, awkward materials may not be life threatening in small quantities, but dollies can easily smash or pinch hands if not used properly. A fully loaded dolly can weigh approximately 1,600 lbs. Push this load into a corner and you could easily crush your hands. You cannot stop a loaded dolly once it starts rolling by just grabbing at the load. This puts your hands around the corners of the load that can hit a wall or doorframe. Instead, pull on the bars on the back of the dolly. This simple action can save your hands.

Excessive Force

Much of construction work involves the use of force with hands and body. Heavy lifting, pushing & pulling materials into place, prying, hammering, etc. It is very easy to exceed one's personal capabilities and apply too much force trying to get the job done. Whenever you are applying force, you should always ask yourself: "What happens if?" What happens if your hand or tool slips? What happens if you can't control or stop the load? Make sure you're not putting yourself in an awkward position. And most importantly, make sure you're not exceeding your own physical capability. If the task doesn't feel comfortable, stop and reevaluate your situation. Don't force yourself beyond your limitations – get a tool or another person to help.

To prevent these types of injuries, you must first learn how to recognize these hazards. You must always assume that you're going to cut yourself when you handle sharp objects, that your hand or tool is going to slip, or the load you're handling is going to pinch or crush your hand. And remember! – Gloves are valuable PPE and are required when there is a risk of any injury to your hands.

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