Weekly Safety Meetings
Safety Training for the Construction Industry

Premium Membership

Brad Smith Roofing Co Inc

Volume 39 Issue 10 March 7, 2016

Protect Your Hands and Fingers with Gloves

It's been estimated that 20% of disabling injuries involve hands and fingers. Just think about the times, both on and off the job, when you've: reached for a sharp object without looking, nearly cut your finger, almost had your hand crushed, or had a dangerous chemical splash onto your hand. Damaging the skin, nerves, or bones in your hands or fingers could make it impossible for you to do your job and could severely reduce your quality of life. Think about it: Can you button your shirt using one hand?

Hand and finger injuries can be prevented. Always keep these safe work practices in mind:

- Don't put your hands under or between objects, where they can be pinched or crushed.
- Keep your hands away from rotating gears, cutters, sprockets, belts, etc.
- Coordinate with your co-workers when you're moving a heavy object into position, so no one's fingers get smashed.

There are too many hazards on the job to leave your hands unprotected. Think about the task you are about to begin, consider the hazards involved, and put on the right gloves for the job. Manufacturers offer a huge variety of gloves for the different hazards on the jobsite. There are cut-resistant gloves, leather gloves, welding gloves, coated knit gloves, electrically-insulated gloves, chemical-resistant gloves, vibration-dampening gloves, and many more. There is a glove that will help protect your hands.

Here are some tips for choosing and using gloves:

- Leather work gloves will protect against blisters and scrapes, but don't rely on them for everything.
- When you work with hazardous chemicals, choose gloves that will protect your hands from the specific chemical you're using.
- Wear gloves rated for cut-resistance when you handle blades, glass, cutters, sharp pieces of metal, construction debris, and other materials that could cut through your skin.
- Don't wear gloves when you use machines that have rotating parts. The glove could get caught and pull your hand into danger.

Make sure your gloves fit properly. Choose gloves that fit snugly but aren't too tight. Tight gloves can cause circulation problems, while gloves that are too big can make it hard for you to grip objects. Wearing the right size gloves can minimize fatigue, keep your hands comfortable, and reduce accidents from slippery fingers. If you aren't sure which glove is right for the job, talk to your supervisor.

Even when your hands are protected, always stay alert and focus on where you place them because gloves won't protect your hands and fingers from being crushed, broken, or amputated.

SAFETY REMINDER

Inspect gloves before use. Don't wear damaged gloves.

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SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

S.A.F.E. CARDS® PLANNED FOR THIS WEEK:

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MEETING DOCUMENTATION:

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Aerial Lifts

Look around this jobsite. Are there any aerial lifts in use? Whether here or on a different site, you've seen steelworkers use lifts when they were bolting up steel. You've seen painters, electricians, drywallers, sprinkler fitters, and many other trades use aerial lifts. In fact, according to OSHA, aerial lifts have replaced ladders and scaffolding on many job sites because they are mobile and flexible. But they can also be dangerous. On average, about 30 workers are killed on aerial lifts each year. Most of these deaths are caused by falls, electrocutions, collapses, or tipovers. We're going to discuss some safe work practices you should follow whenever you work from or operate a lift.

Training: You must be trained before you operate any aerial lift. You will learn how to inspect, set up, and operate the lift. You'll also learn what safety equipment is required, and how to recognize and avoid hazards associated with the lift.

Pre-shift inspections: Before you start work for the day, inspect the lift to make sure that all controls and systems are working properly.

Caught-in-between and crushing hazards: If you are working in the basket, don't position yourself between the rails of the basket and any overhead hazards like joists or beams. If the basket moves, you could get crushed.

Power lines: Remember to "Look up and live." Locate all the power lines on the site. Better yet, mark them with warning signs. Stay at least 10 feet away from the nearest energized overhead lines. Always treat power lines, wires, and other conductors as if they are energized unless you can verify that they have been de-energized and grounded.

Falls: Just as you put on your seat belt in the car, when you're in the basket, use a body harness or restraining belt to keep you from being ejected or pulled from the basket.

Grades and inclines: Set the brakes and use wheel chocks when you're on an incline. Operating a lift on a slope moves its center of gravity and can lead to a tipover. Don't use a lift on a grade, side slope, or ramp that is steeper than allowed in the manufacturer's instructions.

Exclusion zones: Set up, mark, and enforce an exclusion zone around the lift so neither workers nor pedestrians can be struck by dropped tools, materials, etc. You don't want to be the cause of a struck-by accident.

Some general don'ts: Don't override hydraulic, mechanical, or electrical safety devices. Don't ever move the equipment with workers in the elevated platform; that is, unless this is permitted by the manufacturer. Don't try to reach a little farther by standing on a ladder, bucket, or box in the basket. Don't stand on the rails. Don't use an aerial lift as a forklift or a crane. Don't drive a lift on unstable surfaces or uneven ground.

SAFETY REMINDER

Don't exceed the load limit of the lift. Be sure to account for the combined weight of workers, tools, and materials.

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How to Stop the Bleeding

There are a lot of opportunities to get cut on a construction site; sharp objects and rough edges are all around. Misusing or mishandling sharp tools can also lead to cuts and puncture wounds.

Occasionally, even when we are careful, cuts, lacerations, and puncture wounds still occur and they all bleed. Do you know what to do to control mild or severe bleeding? Before you start first aid, always call 911, or have someone else call for you. Here are several techniques that you can use to stop or at least slow down the bleeding until professional help arrives.

Direct Pressure: Most external bleeding can be controlled by direct pressure over the wound. Place a sterile gauze dressing directly over the wound and press against it. If a sterile gauze dressing is not available, use a handkerchief, towel, or any clean cloth that is available. If the bleeding soaks through the gauze or bandage, add another one on top of it. Don't remove the gauze. Keep pressing firmly on the area.

Elevation: If bleeding persists, continue applying direct pressure and elevate the extremity above the level of the heart. When you do this, gravity helps reduce blood pressure and slows bleeding to allow clotting. Be aware that elevation alone will not stop bleeding. And remember that you should not move a broken extremity.

Pressure Points: If bleeding still continues, press down at a pressure point while still applying direct pressure to the wound. A pressure point exists where an artery is near the skin's surface, and where it passes close to a bone against which it can be compressed.

Tourniquet: Use a tourniquet as a last resort to save a life, only when all other methods have failed. Tourniquets are rarely, if ever, necessary. A tourniquet can damage nerves and blood vessels and may cause the loss of an arm or leg. If you have been trained to apply a tourniquet, do so very carefully and never use rope or wire.

No matter what kind of wound you're dealing with, don't remove any large or deeply embedded objects. Don't examine the wound with your hands or any object. If possible, wear latex gloves or vinyl gloves, or use other methods to protect yourself from contact with the victim's blood. Afterwards, wash your hands with soap and water.

It is better to avoid getting injured than to have to control the bleeding. Prevent injuries by following safe work practices and wearing the necessary personal protective equipment. Keep in mind that while wearing the right cut-resistant gloves can help you avoid cuts, it's also really important to actually pay attention to what you're doing and to watch where you're putting your hands.

SAFETY REMINDER

On the jobsite: Do you know where the nearest first-aid kit is located? At home: Is your first-aid kit stocked?

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Avoid Struck-By Accidents

We've all heard about fatal construction accidents where objects fell and killed people. Do you remember hearing about the HVAC unit that fell 30 stories from a crane in downtown Manhattan? Do you remember the delivery man who was killed by a tape measure that fell 50 stories after slipping off a construction worker's tool belt? Think about situations that could put you or others at risk for struck-by injuries.

Do you ever "forget" your hard hat? When you walk onto the jobsite at the beginning of your shift, the first thing you should do is put on your hard hat. It will protect your skull from many struck-by hazards.

Do you ever climb up a ladder with tools in your hand? It's not good practice to use your hands to grip rungs and tools at the same time. You don't have a proper grip on either the rung or the tools if you do that. Put your tools—and tape measures—securely in your tool belt or hoist them up in a bucket after you've climbed up the ladder.

Do you work on a scaffold, platform, or swing stage? The scaffolds you work on should have **toeboards** to prevent you from kicking an item or tool off the edge. But what if the tool isn't on the platform, but it's in your hand instead? One false move could cause you to lose control of a hammer, trowel, or screwdriver, and suddenly, without warning, the tool is falling to the ground below. To avoid this, consider **tethering** your hand tools to the scaffold so they can't fall. You can also prevent dropped items from falling to the ground or onto others by installing **debris nets** on at least three sides of the scaffold. Prevent others from walking or working beneath you by establishing and marking an **exclusion zone** on the ground underneath your scaffold or platform.

You don't have to be working from heights to create struck-by hazards for yourself and others. Struck-by accidents can happen when you're on the ground too. Pay attention to your surroundings when you're moving or carrying items like pipe and 2x4s. It looks funny on The Simpsons or The Three Stooges, but whacking a buddy with a 2x4 is no joke. Don't let a case of "butterfingers" cause an accident when you're lifting materials or working with tools. Your steel-toe boots will preserve your toes, but there is more to you than toes. Don't work with greasy hands, and wear work gloves with a good grip. Always respect exclusion zones so you don't get hit by a headache ball or a brick that falls from a scaffold. Stay alert.

We can't control the force of gravity that makes things fall. But each of us can control the tools and materials that we work with so they don't fall, and that will make the jobsite safer for everyone.

SAFETY REMINDER

Look around the jobsite today. Do you see anything that is on an edge, or could fall and hurt someone? If so, fix the problem before it causes an accident or injury.

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