Toolbox Talk # 3.03 – Hands Are Worth Protecting

We all use our hands a great deal without really thinking about it. Because hands are used so much, they are prone to injury from many hazards:

- Mechanical hazards (causing injuries like cuts, punctures, crushing, and scrapes);
- Extreme heat or cold;
- Electrical shock or burns; and
- Skin irritation from chemicals or germs.

OSHA requires companies like yours to look for hand hazards in its work areas, minimize those hazards, and properly train workers about hand protection for those workers who require it. The following statistics demonstrate the need for effective hand protection:

- About 500,000 work-related injuries occur to hands, fingers, and arms each year.
- About one-quarter of all work-related injuries is to the fingers and hands.
- Injuries to fingers and thumbs are second on the list of most injured part of the body.

Hand hazards

Hand protection can only do so much. That's why your employer assesses each situation to see if hazards can be eliminated through engineering controls such as machine guards and improved workstation design. If hazards remain after attempting to eliminate hand hazards, then your employer will provide hand protection for you and your co-workers.

Company policy: For your safety, it is crucial that you understand and follow your company's procedures for hand protection. If you have any questions regarding how to protect your hands from injury on the job, ask your supervisor or check with the hand protection manufacturer.

Gloves:

- Leather gloves protect against sparks, moderate heat, blows, chips, and rough objects.
- Aluminized gloves are usually used for welding, furnace, and foundry work because they provide reflective and insulating protection against heat.
- Metal mesh gloves protect against lacerations. They do not insulate from heat or cold.
- Aramid fiber gloves are made from a synthetic material that protects against heat and cold. Aramid fiber is used to make durable gloves that are cut- and abrasion-resistant
- Fabric gloves can protect against dirt, slivers, chafing, and abrasion. These gloves do not provide sufficient protection to be used with rough, sharp, or heavy materials.
- Coated fabric gloves are useful for general-purpose hand protection and offer slip-resistant qualities
- Plastic film gloves are used for sanitation and food processing operations.
- Chemical resistant gloves (butyl rubber, natural rubber latex, neoprene, nitrile) protect against corrosive, irritating, and corrosive chemicals like acids, cleansers, or solvents. No one type of chemical resistant glove can protect workers from ALL chemicals. See the manufacturer's chemical resistance charts.

Rules of thumb:

- Inspect gloves for defects like holes, cracks, and other wear before each use. Leaks are especially dangerous.
- Powder hands to make gloves easier to get into and out of.
- Be especially cautious when using any kind of glove with, or near machinery. This is due to the hazard of a part of the glove getting caught in the machinery and drawing a finger or hand into danger.
- Wash or rinse reusable gloves according to your company's cleaning procedures after each use.
- Hold the cuff and pull the glove off so it turns inside out to remove a glove. Do not pull on the fingers. This only contaminates hands.
- Store reusable gloves away from hot areas because heat can stiffen, shrink, and crack gloves.
- Dispose gloves in special containers.
- Clean and dry hands before applying barrier cream.

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Project: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor: _____ Company: _____

Other safety issues covered or comments from crew members:

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Attendees:

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