

# Hand Safety and Injury Prevention

Our hands are crucial for almost every task we perform at work, making them vulnerable to injuries. Protecting our hands and fingers is essential for maintaining our ability to work and improving our overall quality of life. While safety gloves are the most common type of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the workplace, hand injuries consistently rank as one of the top categories of workplace injuries.

## Hand Injury Statistics (Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety)

- Approximately 56,000 hand injuries are reported annually in Canada.
- Over 30,000 workers seek medical attention for hand injuries each year.
- Around 70% of workers who experienced a hand injury were not wearing gloves.
- Of those wearing gloves, 30% had gloves that were either damaged or unsuitable for the task.

## Common Types of Hand Injuries

1. **Lacerations:** These are the most frequent hand injuries, often caused by sharp tools or objects. Many employees use inadequate gloves when handling sharp implements. Gloves made from materials like Kevlar can help protect against cutting motions, but they may not prevent punctures from straight stab actions. Always exercise caution when working with sharp items.
2. **Crush Injuries:** These injuries often happen when hands are caught between moving parts or machinery. Pinch points on equipment and tools are common sources of crush injuries.
3. **Fractures:** Sudden impacts to the fingers or hands can result in fractures. Common causes include falls and motor vehicle accidents, particularly when individuals extend their hands to brace themselves.

## Hand Safety Practices and Procedures

- **Use Tools:** Whenever possible, use tools to keep your hands out of harm's way. For example, using a push stick when operating a table saw can help minimize risk.
- **Avoid Fixed Open-Blade Knives:** Choose safety knives that limit blade exposure and retract automatically when pressure is released.
- **Visibility:** Never place your hands in areas where you cannot see them.
- **Wear Appropriate Gloves:** Always select the right gloves for the specific task and be aware of their limitations.
- **De-energize Equipment:** Never work on energized equipment. Always lock and tag out machinery to ensure it cannot start unexpectedly while you are working on it.

