Hand injuries - keep your hands clear, every task, every time

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One of our Members notes a spate of recent hand injuries occurring during multiple activities.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Line of fire

What happened?

One of our Members notes a spate of recent hand injuries occurring during activities such as lifting and rigging, manual handling, valve operation, drilling, grinding, machinery maintenance, handling chains, disassembly of equipment, and routine workshop activities.
In several cases:

- Loads, chains, pins, tools or equipment shifted unexpectedly.
- Personnel instinctively attempted to stop, guide or control moving objects by hand.
- Rotating or powered tools contacted the hand during use or handling.
- Pinch points were not fully recognized during otherwise routine tasks.

Hand injuries can result in cuts, lacerations and puncture wounds, crushed fingertips and fractures and nerve, tendon and nail damage. **Watch your hands – you've only got one set!**

What we can learn to prevent hand injuries

- **Plan the work:** Identify pinch points, stored energy, sharp edges, rotating equipment, suspended loads and potential movement during the Toolbox Talk and final risk assessment.
- **Keep hands out of the line of fire:** Before starting any task, identify where hands will be if equipment moves, a load shifts, a tool slips, pressure is released or material falls. If equipment, tools or materials move unexpectedly, your hands should remain outside the danger zone.
- **Expect unexpected movement:** Loads, shackles, chains, tools, rotating machinery and pressurized equipment can move suddenly and without warning.
- **Do not rely on your reflexes:** When an object starts to fall, roll or shift, do not instinctively try to catch, stop or guide it with your hands.
- **Use the right tools and equipment:** Select tools suitable for the task. Use holding devices, mechanical aids and positioning tools where possible to keep hands away from hazards;
- **Control movement:** Secure loads, chains, pins, workpieces and equipment before work starts. Anticipate gravity, pressure, vessel motion and stored energy.
- **Gloves are not a primary control:** Gloves help reduce injury severity but will

not protect against all pinch point, crushing, cutting or entanglement hazards. Correct hand positioning remains the most effective safeguard.
- **Stop and re-assess:** If conditions change, equipment behaves unexpectedly or exposure increases, stop the job and assess the risk again.

Useful questions

- Where are the pinch points in this task?
- What could move unexpectedly?
- Where will my hands be if the load shifts, a tool slips or energy is released?
- Am I relying on gloves rather than safe hand positioning?
- Can a mechanical aid, clamp or positioning tool be used instead of my hands?
- What would happen if I instinctively tried to stop a moving object?
- Have I considered stored energy, gravity, pressure and vessel motion?
- How often will I stop and reassess conditions for changes?

Members may wish to refer to

- IMCA Safety promotional material on hand safety

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