Finger and Hand Injury Prevention

OSHA Standard reads, 29CFR 1910.138(a)(b). Employers shall select and require employees to use appropriate hand protection when employees’ hands are exposed to hazards such as those from skin absorption of harmful substances, sever cuts or lacerations; severe abrasions; punctures’ chemical burns; thermal burns; and harmful extremes. Employers shall base the selection of the appropriate hand protection on an evaluation of the performance characteristics of the hand protection relative to the tasks to be performed, conditions present, duration of use, and the hazards and potential hazards identified.

The ability to operate concrete sawing and drilling equipment safely and efficiently is something that contractors should not take for granted. Complacency in the workplace can lead to accidents and injuries that may have permanent consequences. The loss of a finger or entire hand can have an enormous impact on a person's life and end careers in an instant.

How important are your hands?
The hand is one of the most complex parts of the body. The movement of the tendons, bones, tissues and nerves allows a person to grip and do a wide variety of complex jobs. Without hands, it would be extremely difficult for someone to do routine simple tasks, such as opening doors, using a fork or tying shoelaces. Hands make a person a skilled, valuable worker.

This practical exercise is an example of how a simple task can become difficult after a hand injury: Tuck your thumbs into the palms of your hands. Now try tying your shoelaces.

Hand injuries
Common causes of hand injuries are:

- Carelessness
- Bypassing safety procedures
- Distraction
- Lack of awareness

Work safely
Prior to using and hand or power tools, the following precautions should be observed:

- Inspect all equipment before use.
- Use the right tool for the job and operate tools within the limits of their design.
- Keep all tools in good condition with proper storage and regular maintenance; never use defective equipment.
- Tools, equipment or machinery with missing guards or defective safety equipment should not be used.
- Don the correct PPE for the job.
- Do not wear jewelry that could become caught on tools, machinery or equipment.
- Always de-energize and follow lock-out/tag-out procedures before carrying out any maintenance or repair work. Equipment should not be running while any maintenance procedures, repairs or bit changes are being made.
- Never place fingers, hands or arms through moving parts.
- Wear appropriate gloves when working and inspect them thoroughly for holes, tears or general signs of wear before use.
- Always wash or clean hands thoroughly and frequently, particularly after using chemicals.
- Read labels carefully and take the recommended precautions to protect hands and the rest of the body when using chemicals.
- Should injury occur, seek medical assistance immediately and notify the site supervisor.
- Be attentive to the task being carried out and be sure to start and finish the job in a safe manner.
- Be aware that many items on the jobsite, when in use, may be hot enough to burn exposed skin.
- Do not use hands to check for hydraulic leaks.

**Finger and Hand Injury Prevention - Quiz**

The following statements should be answered with “True” or “False.” Answers below.

1. An operator can use sawing and drilling equipment just as efficiently after losing fingers or a hand.
2. Hand or finger injuries can occur by being distracted, careless or avoiding safety procedures.
3. As long as it is used properly, a piece of sawing or drilling equipment can be without a guard.
4. A machine should be turned off before performing maintenance checks.
5. Regardless of container labels, treat all chemicals the same.

**Answers:**

1. False  
2. True  
3. False  
4. True  
5. False