



Safety That Fits Like a Glove

Hand injuries are a common hazard in the construction industry. If a workplace hazard assessment reveals that you face potential hand injuries that cannot be eliminated through engineering and work practice controls, you must wear appropriate protection. In other words, wear gloves when your hands are exposed to hazards such as skin absorption of harmful substances, severe cuts or lacerations, severe abrasion, punctures, chemical burns, and temperature extremes.

There are many types of gloves available today to protect against a wide variety of hazards. When selecting gloves, consider the nature of the hazard and the activities involved. The variety of potential hand injuries on the job makes selecting the right pair of gloves challenging. It is essential that you use gloves specifically designed for the hazards and tasks found in your workplace. Gloves designed for one purpose (such as cut protection) may not offer the protection you need if you wear them for a different purpose (such as working with chemicals).

The following list includes examples of factors that you should consider when selecting protective gloves both on and off the job:

- Types of hazards you will be exposed to
- Nature of contact (total immersion, splash, etc.)
- Duration of contact
- Area requiring protection (hand only, forearm, arm)
- Thermal protection
- Grip requirements (working with dry, wet, or oily objects)
- Size and comfort
- Abrasion resistance requirements

Protective gloves should be inspected before each use to ensure that they are not torn, punctured, or made ineffective in any way. Discoloration or stiffness may indicate deficiencies caused by excessive use or deterioration from chemical exposure. A visual inspection will help detect cuts or tears but a more thorough inspection (done by filling the gloves with water and tightly rolling the cuff toward the fingers) will help reveal any pinhole leaks.

Discard and replace damaged gloves and those that cannot offer complete protection. Think twice before reusing chemical-resistant gloves; take into consideration the absorptive qualities of the gloves and how long they were used. You should also consider the toxicity of the chemicals involved and factors such as duration of exposure and temperature.



Remember, you can get a new pair of gloves, but not a new pair of hands.

SAFETY REMINDER

Carelessness or lack of training when using hand tools can also lead to hand injuries. Be sure you're familiar with hand tool safety and know how to use every tool properly.