



HAND INJURY PREVENTION

Hand injuries can be especially traumatic, stripping away not only one's ability to work, but also the ability to perform activities of daily living. The two primary types of workplace hand injuries are traumatic events and overuse or repetitive-motion injuries.

MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

Hand-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are painful, sometimes crippling, injuries that generally affect nerves, tendons, tendon sheaths, and muscles in the hands, fingers, and wrists. They may develop from frequent:

- Repetitive motions on a machine or keyboard, packing, cutting, etc.
- Forceful exertion.
- Use of vibrating or impact tools.

Carpal tunnel syndrome, for example, is a common MSD that occurs when the nerve that runs through the wrist's carpal tunnel is pinched. Initial symptoms are numbness, tingling, and weakness. Carpal tunnel syndrome can reduce strength and mobility in wrist and hands and may cause permanent damage.

A worker with a severe hand-related MSD might require surgery, be out of work for weeks, and must remain on restricted duty for a while after returning to work.

All of that can add up to a lot of pain and suffering for the worker and a lot of lost productivity and increased costs for your organization. That is why the best way to handle hand-related MSDs is to prevent them.

MINIMIZE MSDs.

Repetitive movements are the most common cause of hand-related MSDs. To prevent injury, employees should:

- Avoid repetitive movements whenever possible.
- Alternate tasks to reduce time spent performing tasks that put a lot of stress on hands.
- Take mini breaks frequently to relax tense muscles and give hands a rest.



FOR ENQUIRIES:

YOUR SAFETY DEPARTMENT, LLC

P + 1 888 859 5653

info@yoursafetydept.com

www.yoursafetydept.com

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It is also important for workers to choose the right tool for the job to reduce strain and awkward positions. And when using tools, workers should:

- Grip tools so the thumb and index finger overlap slightly.
- Avoid bending wrists while holding tools.
- Use clamps, jigs, etc., to help avoid awkward positions and bent wrists.
- Carry materials using a palm-down grip.
- Reduce vibration related injuries by operating tools at the lowest efficient speed possible.
- Hold tools as loosely as possible without losing your grip.
- Use mechanical aids, not hands, to grasp and hold materials while working on them.
- Keep hands warm. Cold hands make workers grip tools and materials too tightly. When hands are cold, workers are also more likely to develop problems from vibration.
- Finally, encourage employees to report MSDs affecting the hands, fingers, and wrists immediately. Symptoms include:
 - Pain or aching
 - Numbness, tingling, and stiffness
 - A burning sensation
 - Swelling
 - Weakness
 - Hand Safety Do's and Don'ts

TAKE ACTION

- Whatever the causes, there are several steps workers can take to help reduce the risk of hand injuries and to minimize the impact of those that do occur.
- Recognize the value of experienced workers, especially on high-risk equipment.
- Invest in workplace safety training. "It can't pay off enough."
- Identify opportunities to increase the comfort and ergonomics of tools. Find ways to decrease the amount of force workers must apply to create and assemble parts.
- Cross-train employees and rotate them during the day, or between shifts, so that they are using different muscle/tendon groups. This will help increase job satisfaction and can decrease the risk of injuries, especially among older workers.

Establish a plan, along with your workers' compensation carrier, for how you will manage hand injuries. Some businesses acknowledge that, even though the ailments may have been caused by non-work factors, they can be claimed through workers' compensation. This shows that an employer values the employees and their overall well being.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Safety has no quitting time!



MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: _____ Person Conducting Meeting: _____

Topic: _____

Branch: _____ Division: _____

Attendees:

NAME	INITIAL	DATE

NAME	INITIAL	DATE

Additional Items Discussed:

Problem Areas or Concerns:

Comments:

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