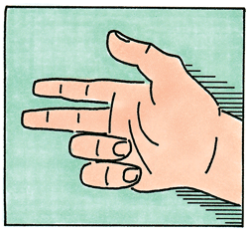
HAND PROTECTION

How would you answer the question, "What is the most used tool in industry?" Some people would name a commonly used hand tool like a hammer or screwdriver. Others might respond with a list of larger equipment such as lathes or power tools. But the correct answer is deceptively simple. The most used tool in almost any workplace is the human hand.

Hand protection is important because our hands are exposed to so many hazards in the workplace.

WHERE ARE THE REGULATIONS?



The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulates personal protective equipment in general and hand protection at 29 CFR 1910.132 and .138. The City can help you to select and provide you with hand protection when you are exposed to hazards such as skin absorption of harmful substances, cuts or lacerations, abrasions, punctures, chemical burns, or harmful temperature extremes.

Your department will assess the hazards in the workplace to determine if hand protection is needed.

Your department will train you in the proper use of hand protection. You must know:

- When hand protection is necessary.
- What type is necessary?
- How to properly put on, take off, adjust, and wear gloves, mitts, or other protection.
- Hand protection limitations.
- Proper care, maintenance, useful life, and disposal of hand protection.

You must show that you understand the training and can use hand protection properly before you will be allowed to perform work requiring its use.

HAND INJURIES ARE COMMON

At work, your hands are exposed to three basic kinds of hazards:

- **Mechanical hazards**. These are present wherever machinery is used. Injuries resulting from machinery use might include cuts, punctures, abrasions, or crushing.

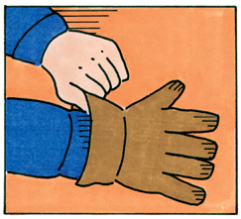
- **Environmental hazards**. Factors like extreme heat or cold, electricity, and materials handling have the potential to injure your hands.

- **Irritating substances**. Skin conditions such as dermatitis can be caused by contact with chemicals and biological agents (bacteria, fungi, and viruses). Chemicals and toxic substances can also enter the blood stream through abrasions or cuts.

THE FIRST DEFENSE

The first defense in the battle to reduce hand injuries is engineering controls designed into equipment during manufacture or used to alter the work environment to make it safe. Machine guards protect hands and fingers from moving parts and should not be altered or removed.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) can help reduce the frequency and severity of hand and finger injuries.



Gloves

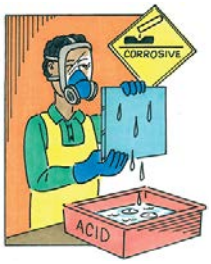
Gloves are perhaps the most commonly used type of PPE. They provide protection to fingers, hands, wrists, and forearms. Gloves should be selected to protect against specific hazards. Types range from common canvas work gloves to highly specialized gloves used in specific industries.

Electrical-Resistant

Good examples of job-rated hand protection are special electrical-resistant rubber gloves and line workers' rubber insulating sleeves. They are made of natural or synthetic rubber and are color coded to correspond with their level of voltage protection.

Leather

Leather gloves are useful for handling rough or abrasive materials. Leather gloves are also useful for handling hot objects.



Canvas

Canvas or cloth gloves are worn for general light-duty protection for handling rough objects.

Chemical-Resistant

Rubber, vinyl, or neoprene gloves are used when handling caustic chemicals like acids, cleansers, or petroleum products. These gloves are rated as being safe for use with certain kinds of chemicals. For chemical-resistance information, read the glove manufacturer's chemical resistance charts. They rate each glove material and how it withstands specific chemicals.

Proper fit is important

Wear only gloves that fit your hand. Gloves that are too small can tire your hands, and gloves that are too large are clumsy to work with. Gloves should be worn with great caution near moving equipment or machinery parts. The glove could get caught and pull your fingers or hand into the machinery. Gloves should be given proper care and cleaning. They should be inspected regularly for change in shape, hardening, stretching, or rips.

WORK AT WORKING SAFELY

Because you use your hands every day on the job, they can easily be injured. Keep these points in mind to protect your hands as you work:

1. Protective equipment selection depends upon the nature of the hazards in your workplace.
2. Gloves should fit you properly and be maintained in the same careful way as other safety equipment.
3. Do not wear gloves where they could get caught in moving machine parts.