

PROTECT YOUR HANDS

Let's take a minute here to talk about your hands. How would your life be affected if you lost a finger? Not Much? A lot? How about if you lost your thumb? No problem you say? Try using any tool effectively without your thumb. What if you lost a hand? Or both hands? I know of one person's grandfather who lost both of his hands and forearms in a farming accident when he was a kid. While he was a remarkable and successful man, there were many things that people with two good hands take for granted that took him years to master. Like eating with a fork, (he refused to use prosthetics), or dealing from a deck of cards. What would you do if you lost your hands? Think about it. It probably would not be what you are doing now.

Accidents just don't happen, one of the contributing factors could be not planning the job. I am sure that you can think of instances in your own life where you or somebody you know or love was injured because of improper planning. The grandfather who lost his hands as a young boy did so because he didn't shut down the threshing machine before he tried to unclog it. You may be shaking you head and thinking that you would never do such a thing. But how many times A DAY do you do something that could result in an accident to yourself or those around you? Someone, somewhere suffers an injury every single day, every single hour and probably every minute.

The construction trades and manufacturing industries are especially prone to hand injuries. There are rough materials to handle, objects to be stacked and stored, tools to be utilized, equipment to be operated. All pose special risks to hand injury. To come up with a list on how to protect your hands in each and every situation would be impossible. The list would be never ending. Each new advance in technology also advances the opportunities for people to damage their hands and they will, be it by operating a 100 ton press or testing a circuit board.

People usually approach their tasks "at hand" in one of two ways: they either don't think of safety at all before they jump into the task or they think that they "won't or "can't" hurt themselves. Wrong. They will. If not today then most likely sooner than later. Do the smart thing: Before you begin a project, or take up a tool, or start a piece of equipment, think of the accident that CAN and WILL happen unless you make sure that it doesn't. Apply the "what if" criteria of safety to what you are doing: What if...the knife slips while I am stripping this wire? Will I cut myself? What if...the screw driver slips off this stubborn screw I'm trying to remove from this box in my hand? Will I punch the screwdriver through the palm of my hand? What if...that pallet of material falls off the fork lift while I am holding this gate open? Will my hands be crushed?