WEEK 44 END OF OCTOBER · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Cuts, Pinch Points & Hand Safety

Every task on this site runs through your hands — gripping, guiding, steadying, holding. That's also why they pick up the nicks, cuts, and pinches. Most are small and easy to shrug off, and the habits behind the small ones are the same ones behind the bad ones.

The hazard

Hands and fingers get cut, crushed, and pinched more than most other injuries on site. Utility knives cause deep cuts when they slip toward you. Pinch points — anywhere two things come together, like loads, doors, formwork, and moving equipment — crush a finger in an instant. Power tools, sharp edges, and uncapped rebar add to it, and cold weather makes hands stiff and clumsy just as the season turns.

What to do

- **Keep hands out of the line of fire.** Never between a load and a fixed object, never where you can't see, never in a pinch zone — **and a glove doesn't change that.** Gloves help with abrasion and cuts; nothing you can wear makes it safe to put a hand where a load is going.
- **Use a tool to hold the work, not your fingers.** Push sticks, clamps, dogs, tag lines, a second set of hands.
- **Cut away from your body**, and retract the blade the moment you finish. Keep blades sharp — a dull blade needs more force and slips more.
- **Choose gloves for the task, and follow the tool's rule about them.** Cut-resistant for handling sharp material, but around rotating tools go by the manufacturer's instruction: with plenty of them the right answer is no gloves at all, because a glove that catches takes the hand with it.
- **Isolate before you reach in.** Clearing a jam, changing a bit, adjusting a guard — the tool or machine is off, unplugged or battery out, and any stored energy released first. A trigger is not isolation.
- **Know where the pinch points are before you lift, set, or strip.** Walk it once and say them out loud; formwork and precast bite in predictable places.
- **Warm your hands before fine work** in the cold — numb hands lose grip and feel.

Watch out for

- Reaching in to "guide" a load or a part by hand.
- A retracting knife left open in a pocket or pouch.
- Gloves worn near a spinning bit, wheel, or auger.
- Cold, numb hands on a task that needs feel.

Talk it over

- Where are the pinch points in what we're doing today — name them before we start?
- On the tools we're running: what does the manufacturer say about gloves?
- If something jams this afternoon, what happens before anyone puts a hand near it?

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