

The Basics

Moving machine parts have the potential to cause severe workplace injuries, such as crushed fingers or hands, cuts or amputations, burns, eye injuries or blindness. When used correctly, equipment/machine/tool guards or safeguards help prevent workers' clothing and/or body from coming in contact with the dangerous moving parts. Guards protect from pinch points electrical currents thrown or flying objects/materials, splashing liquids and fast moving parts of machinery or tools.

Some examples of equipment, machines or tools that require the use of guards:

- chains, gears, pulleys, cranks and connecting rods
- rope, belt and chain drives, power take off (PTO) shafts and flywheel
- portable saws, belt sanders, grinders, pneumatic and powder actuated tools

A safeguard should be easy to operate with minimum effort. The guard should be suitable for the job and the machine. If the guard is built-in, it should be checked regularly as guards with rough edges and sharp corners could pose a safety hazard.

How To Protect Yourself

Any machine part, function or process that may cause injury must be safeguarded. If there is a possibility that a worker operating the machine, or those working in the vicinity, could be injured while coming into contact with a machine, the hazards must be eliminated or controlled.

Guards are safe as long as the equipment is regularly monitored and maintained. All guards should be secure and in good condition. If the guard is loose or not working properly, stop work immediately. Report the hazard and do not resume work until the hazard has been addressed.

Other things to consider:

- Always thoroughly inspect equipment and tools prior to use to ensure that the guards are functioning correctly
- Follow the manufacturers' recommendations for proper use, care and maintenance
- Use the equipment for only its intended purpose
- Tag defective equipment out of service until it is repaired or discarded and replaced

- Always wear the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including, face shields, helmets, gloves, etc. for added safety
- Safeguards must never be made inoperative

Legislation

Safeguards—Part 10: Machine Safety 10-4(1) Except where otherwise provided by these regulations, an employer or contractor shall provide an effective safeguard where a worker may contact:

- (a) a dangerous moving part of a machine; (b) a pinch point, cutting edge or point of a machine at which material is cut, shaped, bored or formed; (c) an open flame; (d) a steam pipe or other surface with a temperature that exceeds or may exceed 80° Celsius; or (e) a cooled surface that is or may be less than minus 80° Celsius.

An employer or contractor shall ensure that a safeguard required by subsection (1) remains in place at all times.

Subsection (1) does not apply to: (a) a machine that is equipped with an effective safety device that stops the machine automatically before any part of a worker's body comes into contact with a hazard mentioned in clause (1)(a) or (b); or (b) a belt, rope or chain that is operated from a cathead or capstan.

An employer or contractor shall ensure that a safeguard that is removed from a machine or made ineffective to permit maintenance, testing, repair or adjustment of a machine is replaced or made effective before a worker is required or permitted to use the machine.

Where there is a possibility of machine failure and of injury to a worker resulting from the failure, an employer or contractor shall install safeguards that are strong enough to withstand the impact of debris from the machine failure and to contain any debris resulting from the failure.

OHS Regulations are very specific when it comes to equipment guards. Keep the knowledge about hazards and equipment to a particular work area up-to-date.

Communication is key to preventing injuries related to the improper use of equipment and machine guards.

For more information on other topics related to injury prevention and workplace safety, visit the SCSA website.