

Tool Box Talk

Hand Protection

Our hands are the most valuable and widely used tools in the workplace. Proper glove selection is essential in protecting our hands from on-the-job hazards. The wrong gloves risk injury to the worker and loss of productivity.

According to the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board, of the claims made in 2017, hand injuries accounted for nearly 30 per cent of all injuries in the construction industry.

Proper Glove Selection

Proper glove selection greatly increases worker safety and productivity. It is important to remember that no single glove will protect in all applications or against every hazard or substance. During the glove selection process, identify key elements that are required to perform the job safely.

- Are chemical hazards present? Do the chemical hazards occur in liquid, gas, powder, or vapour form? Will workers' hands be subject to light splashes or total immersion?
- Are abrasions and punctures from sharp objects a problem? Many gloves are designed to protect from slashes caused by sharp objects, but few provide high levels of puncture resistance from objects such as sharp/pointed edges of a piece of metal or glass. Will abrasions or punctures occur on the palm, top of the hand, or both?
- Is a secure grip vital to the application? When workers cannot grasp objects securely, especially those that are wet or oily, the objects may slide through their hands, resulting in injuries or damaged products.
- Is dexterity important? Working efficiency requires having the dexterity and tactile sensitivity to handle small parts or objects quickly.
- Is protection or dexterity the priority? Thinner-gauge gloves offer more dexterity; heavier-gauge gloves offer greater hand protection.



- Are the gloves properly sized for individual workers? Gloves that are too large will slide around on the hands and could become caught in machinery or moving parts. Gloves that are too snug can decrease a worker's dexterity and may become so uncomfortable that workers will remove them. Keep in mind that men and women have different requirements relative to glove sizes and shapes.
- Will the gloves be required to offer protection from heat or cold temperatures? Insulated gloves should be selected to protect from extreme temperatures.
- Will the worker be wearing the gloves for a few minutes at a time or all day? Comfort is important for longer wear.

Types of Gloves

Electrical Insulating: These gloves are designed to protect qualified workers when working within the Minimum Safe Approach Distance (MSAD) of exposed energized conductors.

Leather: Designed for welding or for other general purposes, welder's gloves have gauntlet cuffs that cover the workers' sleeves to prevent the trapping of welding spatter.

Cut-Resistant: Depending on the level of hazard and the type of work environment, options include stainless steel mesh, Kevlar Fabric, and other materials for lighter-weight cut resistance.

Chemical Resistant: These gloves are made from many different materials and include different cuffs, lengths, and thicknesses. Be sure to choose your gloves based on the chemical resistance to the substance you will be using and the job conditions. Consult the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for the chemical(s) being used.

Heat Resistant: Many general-purpose gloves will provide heat protection, especially gloves made with a woven padding or exterior. For extensive work with hot materials or for temperature extremes, specialized gloves may be necessary to prevent burns.

Cold Resistant: Many types of gloves will also provide some protection against the cold, but it is important to consider the type of work. Be sure to use waterproof gloves for any job where the worker's hands can get wet.