

## Imagine Life Without Fingers

**I**t's a digital world — and for human beings, it always has been.

Never mind personal computers and all the other high-tech gizmos that are supposed to make life easier. Those 10 digits protruding from your palms are just as useful, if not more so.

Whether hunting and gathering food on a prehistoric African plain or drilling for oil in the Gulf of Mexico, we've always relied on our fingers to get the job done. Imagine what your life would be like without a thumb or an index finger.

Many industries provide plenty of opportunity to lose or seriously injure fingers. In fact, they rival the back as the body part involved most frequently in lost-time incidents.

In one example, a forklift operator was helping a crane operator straighten the cable on a spool. When finished, the forklift operator put his hand on the telescopic boom of the crane as he stepped down. He inadvertently placed his finger in a grease hole and a shear point was created. The employee's finger was snipped off between the tip and the middle knuckle.

In another incident, a laborer was using a rag to check for oil leaks on hoses leading to and from a diesel engine. As he was doing so, something pulled the rag. The

cooling fan had caught the rag and pulled his left hand into the blades, severing his fingers.

Such incidents demonstrate that injuries don't just happen. They are caused by workers not paying attention and by not thinking of what could go wrong before commencing work.

### **Many injuries to the fingers, hands and wrists occur for only a few reasons. They include:**

- Tools and equipment used improperly
- Employees failing to recognize or heed nip points, shear points and pinchpoints
- Gloves aren't the proper type for the job

### **To avoid broken, crushed or amputated fingers, it is essential that employees get down to some basics. These include:**

- Conducting job safety analyses and pre-job safety meetings to identify potential hazards and how to deal with them
- Following proper machine guarding and lockout/tagout procedures
- Wearing appropriate clothing and personal protective equipment

*Keeping your fingers intact depends on that most important of safety devices – the brain. It must know and be alert to the dangers that can damage or destroy your digital world.*

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Fingers aren't as important today as they were in the past.  
 True  False
2. Losing a finger isn't serious because you still have seven more to work with.  
 True  False
3. The fingers rival the back as the body part most frequently involved in lost-time incidents.  
 True  False
4. It's possible to inadvertently put your finger in a grease hole and have it snipped off by a shear point.  
 True  False
5. If you're holding a rag, it's impossible for your hand to be pulled into a fan. You would simply let go of the rag first.  
 True  False
6. Finger injuries are commonly caused by workers not paying attention.  
 True  False
7. It doesn't matter what kind of gloves you wear for a particular job, as long as you're protected.  
 True  False
8. Improper use of tools and equipment rarely cause hand injuries.  
 True  False
9. A job safety analysis takes too much time and only points out the obvious.  
 True  False
10. Proper machine guarding and lockout/tagout procedures are a must for safety.  
 True  False

T1512-02

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