

ERGONOMIC SAFETY TALK #3:

Gloves

What is a safety talk?

This safety talk is one of a series of brief meetings held on regular basis with workers and their supervisors to discuss problems and concerns about health and safety. All safety talks involve an informal presentation on a specific subject to the group by a person chosen to lead the session, followed by a discussion of the topic, how it fits into your workplace and what it means to the people who work there.

This document consists of the information with which the person who's delivering the safety talk needs to be familiar, followed by a Presentation Guide which can be used during the actual safety talk.

Background information

Why worry about hands?

There are 27 bones in each hand and wrist. Most of the muscles that operate the hand are in the forearm. Blood vessels and nerves pass through a small tunnel at the base of your hand that's known as the "carpel tunnel". When injuries happen to the hand, the thumb and pointer finger are the most commonly injured fingers. That's why wearing the proper type and size of glove is important.

Gloves

Many workers still don't wear gloves. This may be because they don't fully understand the importance of hand and arm protection, or because the gloves are uncomfortable when working. This is where ergonomics comes in. Gloves must fit well and allow for comfortable finger and wrist movement. If gloves are uncomfortable to wear, it is usually because they don't fit properly. Comfortable gloves will help ensure that the worker makes a conscious effort to wear them.

Properly fitting gloves are important not only for comfort but for safety. Poorly fitting gloves increase the amount of force required by the muscles because they have to work harder to compensate for the loose or tight glove. Tight gloves can cause pressure on the hands, limit your dexterity and increase perspiration, leading to fatigue and related injuries. Loose gloves reduce your grip strength, impair your dexterity and productivity and can create other safety hazards, such as if they slip off your hands while you're working. The "one-size-fits all" approach to gloves doesn't work when you're dealing with a physically diverse work force.

Gloves are just as important as any other piece of personal protective equipment. Gloves with grips can help prevent repetitive-type injuries such as tendonitis by requiring less force from the fingers to do the task. Arm-hand vibration is another factor that needs to be considered when selecting the proper style of glove. Some gloves are made specifically for reducing the effects of vibration on the hands and arms.

The most common gloves worn in forestry work are the heavy, thick work-type gloves. Commonly used for piling lumber on the boardway. Veneer mills have had thinner leather gloves used by operators splicing and handling veneer. These protect the worker from slivers during the handling of veneer while allowing for good grip. Various

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types of gloves for different tasks are an important consideration. With a high percentage of women in the veneer/plywood workforce, it has been important to ensure the appropriate size and type of glove for their unique needs.

Wearing the right type of glove everyday will protect you. Companies sometimes choose lower-quality gloves to cut costs. But in the end this may cost them more money, as the lower-quality gloves often don't offer the same level of protection and are made of less durable materials.

Companies can ensure that everyone has the appropriate glove for the work they do by making a list of departments in operation, then breaking down the tasks done by these departments and determining the correct type of glove to be worn for each task.

For example, in a veneer operation the worker who is handling the veneer may need fingerless-type gloves, while a maintenance worker in the same department needs an entirely different type of glove. Even within the maintenance department there will be variations depending on the task. For example, handling saws would require a different type of glove than welding.

How to select a glove:

When selecting a type of glove, here are some key questions to ask:

- How often will the task or tasks be done, and for how long?
- What degree of dexterity will be required?
- What hazards will the worker be exposed to while doing the work? (For example, factors such as temperature, chemicals being handled, overall resistance, and whether a cuff is needed.)
- If the worker is using a tool, what type of surface does it have? (For example, a slippery surface requires a textured glove so that you can maintain a good grip.)

To make sure the glove you choose is a proper fit:

- Extend your hand out flat.
- Measure your hand with a tailor's tape. Measure around the hand just below the knuckles and fingers, but above the thumb.
- Measure your dominant hand, as it is generally a bit larger.

Other ergonomic safety talks and associated resources

OFSWA posts monthly ergonomic safety meeting talks on its website, www.ofswa.on.ca. Further ergonomic resources such as one-page tip sheets on specific ergonomic hazards in forestry, ergonomic best practices from industry and physical demands analysis (PDA) forms for numerous pieces of forestry equipment are available by clicking "Information" and selecting "Ergonomics".

OFSWA also provides a half-day training program, Ergonomic Injury Prevention, which includes a detailed ergonomic review of a number of common forest industry occupations. For more information on these products and services, contact OFSWA's Consultant Trainer/Ergonomist at 807-343-1784 or email ergonomics@ofswa.on.ca.

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Presentation guide

General Information

- Gloves provide arm and hand protection. Many workers don't wear gloves because they're uncomfortable to wear or use when working.
- Poorly fitting gloves increase the amount of force required from the forearms and hands.
- Tight fitting gloves can cause pressure on the hands, limit dexterity and increase perspiration, leading to fatigue and related injuries.
- Loose-fitting gloves reduce grip strength, impair dexterity and productivity and can cause other safety hazards (they can slip off your hands while you're working).
- Wearing proper fitting gloves everyday will protect you. If the gloves fit properly, wearing them will become second nature.
- The work force is becoming more diverse, with more women working in the forestry sector. Companies need to ensure that the proper size of glove is selected for these workers. One size does not fit all workers.
- Gloves can prevent repetitive-type injuries such as tendonitis by requiring less force from the fingers to do the task.
- If the task involves arm-hand vibration, this must also be considered when purchasing the glove. Some gloves are designed to reduce the effects of arm-hand vibration.

Common Gloves

- The most commonly-worn gloves in forestry are the heavy, thick work-types gloves. These are most commonly seen for piling lumber on the boardway.
- Veneer mills have thinner leather gloves used by operators for splicing and handling veneer. These types of gloves protect the worker from slivers during the handling of veneer while allowing for good grip.
- There are various types of gloves on the market and it's important that the proper glove is chosen for the type of work.

Quality and Type

- Companies sometimes choose lower-quality gloves to cut costs. But this may cost them more money in the end, as the lower-quality gloves often don't offer the same level of protection and are made of less durable materials.
- To determine the type of glove needed in a department, a simple job task analysis can be performed. By determining the type of jobs and tasks performed, the proper glove can be chosen.
 - Veneer workers may need fingerless-type gloves.
 - Maintenance workers may need two or three different types depending on the job being done (i.e. handling saws versus welding).

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Each glove manufacturer's sizes may be slightly different, but here is a general outline for the sizing of gloves:

	Women's sizes		Men's Sizes	
	<i>inches</i>	<i>cm</i>	<i>inches</i>	<i>cm</i>
X-small	6	15		
Small	6½	17	7	18
Medium	7	18	7½ - 8	20
Large	7½	19	9½ - 10	25
X-large	8	20	10½ - 11	30