

MATERIAL HANDLING AND HAND SAFETY

Sharp edges and puncture hazards

When you are handling metal, remember the sharp rolled edges. Every employee gets relaxed around metal: when you see your co-workers do this, remind them about the sharp edges.

Many hand lacerations are caused by carelessness - losing your grip and not wearing gloves (PPE) while handling metal framing, trash, and grids. The hazard is there when we are stocking, installing, or cleaning up. **Always use gloves when handling any kind of metal.** Keep in mind the screws used to install the metal and drywall have sharp points that will also puncture your hands and fingers.

Mechanical pinching hazards

These are present when we use machinery and power tools. Never allow alteration or removal of machine guards on equipment that protects our hands and fingers from moving parts. Examples that you can demonstrate include chop-saw or miter saw blade guards and covers for mechanical parts on lifts.

Crushing hazards

We work with dense and sometimes awkward materials. They are not life-threatening in small quantities. But drywall, with bundles that weigh 180 pounds, can easily smash or pinch hands if you are not handling the load properly. A fully loaded dolly will weigh approximately 1,600 lbs. Push this load into a corner and you could easily crush your hands. You cannot stop a loaded dolly, once it starts rolling, by just grabbing at the rock. This puts your hands around the corners of the load that can hit a wall or doorframe. You should, instead, pull on the bars on the back of the dolly. This simple action will save your hands. Try to teach this to all employees who handle loaded dollies – laborers, apprentices, and drywall mechanics.

Excessive Force

Much of our work requires us to use a lot of force with our hands and body. Heavy lifting, pushing & pulling materials into place, prying, hammering, etc. Many times, we exceed our capabilities and apply too much force to get the job done. Excessive force cannot be measured. It must be controlled by your actions. Whenever you are applying force, you should always ask yourself: “What happens if?” What happens if your hand or tool slips? What happens if you can’t control or stop the load? Always assume the worst could happen and plan for it. Make sure you’re not putting yourself in an awkward position. And most importantly, make sure you’re not exceeding your physical capability. If the task doesn’t feel comfortable, stop and

reevaluate your situation. Don't force yourself beyond your limitations. Get a tool or another person to help.

To stop these types of injuries, you must first learn how to recognize these hazards. You must always assume that you're going to cut yourself when you handle sharp objects, that your hand or tool is going to slip, or that the load you are handling is going to pinch or crush your hand. You must understand that excessive force **ALWAYS** presents a danger. Always plan for the worst thing that can happen and then make plans to prevent it.

REMEMBER!! Gloves are valuable PPE and are required when there is a risk of any injury to your hands.