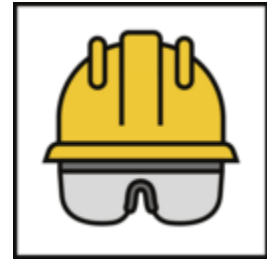


Eye on Safety

By Valerie Januski

Machines can be our biggest help, and machine safeguards are critical to employee safety.

Food for Thought: *What separates man from machine is that machines cannot think for themselves!*



Machine Guards

Machines or tools that have moving parts have the potential to cause severe injuries such as crushed fingers, hands, amputations, burns or blindness. Safeguards are essential for protecting workers from these preventable injuries. Any machine part, function or process that may cause injury must be safeguarded.

Workers responsible to operate, repair, clean or just work near these machines and tools must be protected from potential hazards. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), when the operation of a machine or accidental contact can injure the operator or others in the vicinity, hazards must be eliminated or controlled.

Machine guards are critical to the safety of workers. [Machine guarding](#) shields, devices and safety features cover the hazardous areas, functions or processes of machinery and prevent injury to the machine operator and other workers nearby. Most workers do not realize the dangers that they are protected from because of a simple steel or acrylic guard. For this reason, workers should be familiar with the potential hazards introduced when machines with rotating parts, gears or pulleys are used.

Training is Vital

Ensure all employees are trained on the hazards of the equipment they work with and how to properly operate the equipment.

Also, ensure employees are trained on the types of guards in place, especially for the type of equipment he/she will be operating.

Recognizing the potential hazards of machines starts with understanding the first place where the potential for injury exists – this is the “point of operation.”

Operating Instructions

Having operating instructions for machines ensures that they not only run correctly, but also safely. Instructions help operators understand how the machine works, which will help reduce the likelihood of an injury.

Operating instructions should include at least the following:

- Pre-startup inspection requirements
- Location of the machine's control panel(s), and how each control functions.
- How to adjust the machine, including any guards, and how to feed items into the machine.
- How to start, run and shut down the machine under normal operations.
- How to perform emergency shutdown procedures

Guards Only Work When Used

- Never remove a guard or use a machine if the guard is not in position.
- When guards are removed, power to the machine must be turned off.
- Keep hands away from moving parts and keep guards in place.
- Never reach around or under a guard.
- Always report missing or damaged guards.
- Don't operate a machine without a guard.

If a guard becomes damaged or inoperative while the machine is operating, shut down the machine and inspect and repair any issues.

Only trained and authorized machine operators should be close to the machinery. All other workers must remain at a safe distance. If an employee who is not the machine operator needs to approach a piece of equipment, they should make eye contact with the operator and use clear hand signals to indicate they are approaching.

Machine operators, or those who work in a facility near machines, should wear [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) recommended by the manufacturer and avoid wearing loose-fitting clothing, dangling jewelry, hanging badges or long hair that could get caught in moving parts.

More information on Machine Guarding can be found on OSHA's website at [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov) and at the specific links provided below.

OSHA Quick Card [Protect Yourself: Amputations](#)

OSHA Fact Sheet [Amputations](#)

OSHA eTool [Machine Guarding](#)

OSHA Booklet [Safeguarding Machines and Protecting Employees](#)

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