



---

## ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: *Material Handling - Emphasis on Hand Safety*

---

It seems that no matter what we're doing, we're always using our hands. Because we use them so often, our hands are vulnerable to numerous hazards throughout the day, many times without us even realizing it. This is especially true when it comes to handling materials during work tasks and activities. The key to eliminating unnecessary hand injuries is not only recognizing the hazards associated with your specific trade, but more so, knowing how to reduce and mitigate those hazards.

Take a second and think of all the different materials you handle throughout the day, whether it's a box of paper or a pallet of brick. Now think of all the hazards that you may encounter from handling such material. More than what you expected? As it becomes second nature to us, the easy part is just getting the job done. The hard part, and most necessary part, is stopping for a moment to allow yourself to evaluate your task at hand.

### **Causes of Hand Injuries:**

- Punctures, cuts or lacerations – caused by contact with sharp, spiked or jagged edges on tools or materials.
- Crushed, fractures or amputations – caused by contact with gears, belts, wheels and rollers, falling objects, and rings, gloves or clothing getting caught and putting your hand in harm's way.
- Strains, sprains, and other musculoskeletal injuries – caused by using the wrong tool for the job, or one that is too big, small or heavy for your hand.
- Burns – caused by direct contact with a hot surface or a chemical.
- Dermatitis and other skin disorders – caused by direct contact with chemicals in products and materials

### **Recognizing/Mitigating YOUR Company's Hazards**

Before you start a job, take a minute to think through the task at hand. Ask yourself:

- What tasks will be performed, and which crafts and workers will perform each task?
- Which tools, equipment, chemicals and materials create a potential risk for a hand injury (including skin disorders -- dermatitis, chemical burn, etc.)?
- For each potential hazard, what preventive measures can be taken?

### **Regular Safety Training**

- Safety training is one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce workplace injuries.
- Construction safety training can be short, like a toolbox talk at the beginning of the shift. It can also be more specialized, like fall protection training.
- Regardless of the type of safety training, the important thing is that it's happening regularly.
- Studies show that construction workers who receive regular safety training are 12% less likely to be hurt on the job.
- Consistency keeps your safety message at the front of workers' minds and discourages them from cutting corners.

*Provided by the ASA - Houston Chapter Safety Committee - February 2018*

---

P.O. Box 924943 • Houston, Texas 77292 • ☎ 281.679.1877 • F 281.403.6302 • [asahouston.org](http://asahouston.org) • [asa@asahouston.org](mailto:asa@asahouston.org)

---

American Subcontractors Association-Houston Chapter is a collective voice for a diverse membership committed to quality, safety, and ethics in construction. ASA-HC advocates for legislative reform and provides educational opportunities for the subcontracting community.