

SAFETY ALERT

Pinch Points and Hand Injuries

Pinch points and hands are a painful combination. Pinch point accidents are common in the workplace, and they most often affect the hands. The types of injuries that are seen frequently in the concrete pipe industry include:

- Fingers and hands pinched between jacket handles, box forms, etc.
- Pinching fingers and hands between rolling or moving pipe.
- Repair, cleaning, or working around rotating equipment (wire rollers).
- Using wrong hand tool for the job (using cheater bars)
- Not supporting or removing stored energy on hydraulic/pneumatic equipment
- Hands caught between pallets, rings or headers
- Struck by counterweight or body of a moving forklift
- Hand in the line of fire when load is released from crane

Pinch point accidents can also occur in any kind of workplace and any job. Your hand could be bruised in the pinch point between the boxes and the handcart you are using to carry them. Or you can crush a finger by getting it caught between a roller and the belt as you stand beside a conveyor. Slamming your hand in a door is a very common type of pinchpoint accident - and it can occur anywhere.

A pinch point is a place where the hand (or even the entire body) can be crushed between two moving objects, or between a moving object and a stationary one. Nationally they make up about 15% of all OSHA recordable injuries. At the same time they are preventable by focusing on the job and the possible consequences of your actions. Below are some tips on how you can minimize the chance of getting hurt by a pinch point situation

- ▲ Perform hazard analysis on job tasks to identify pinch point hazards.
- ▲ Practice good housekeeping by keeping your workplace clean and orderly.
- ▲ Wear the right kind of gloves for the job. Wearing them around moving equipment may be an additional hazard.
- ▲ Travel only in designated traffic areas, and be constantly alert for moving equipment and vehicles.
- ▲ Never tamper with machine guards. In many cases, they protect you against pinchpoints in moving machinery and stock. Always replace guards after making repairs or adjustments to equipment.
- ▲ Follow your company's lockout/tagout policy and procedures. These are designed to keep you from being injured by machinery that starts accidentally when you are cleaning, making adjustments or repairs.
- ▲ Secure materials so it cannot fall or roll. Stacked materials should be strapped, racked or interlocked so they cannot shift.
- ▲ Be careful when handling drums, rings, rebar and other metal objects.
- ▲ Beware of rolling hazards. This includes wheels on moving equipment, as well as stock such as stored pipe.
- ▲ Know how to turn off machinery in your work area in case of an emergency - seconds count.
- ▲ Don't wear jewelry or loose clothing when you are working near moving equipment
- ▲ Use doorknobs and drawer handles, to prevent slamming your finger in a pinchpoint.

Take care to be aware of Pinch point hazards. They account for numerous workplace injuries every year. Some even fatal.