

Safety Talk: Machine Guarding

Key Points:

- **20% of all fatal accidents involve being caught up in running machinery**
- **First priority to eliminate hazard**
- **Guarding is put in place to prevent accidental contact with moving parts**
- **Awareness of potential hazards a priority**
- **Take your time to assess danger**

Holding a Successful Safety Meeting

Each safety talk you deliver is important – it could save someone from an injury or even worse. This talk is designed to be delivered in a time frame from 10 to 20 minutes. While the safety talk is the core message you have an important role to play in making certain that the message is heard and understood.

Preparing for your meeting:

- Select a location that is open, not too noisy and where you will not be interrupted. Ideal locations include break rooms and lunch areas.
- Take a few minutes and review the content of the safety talk to understand the content and to think of examples that are specific to your workplace.
- We have included a few interactive discussion points at the end of the talk to help you to get discussion started. Remember, when someone is actively participating in the discussion it helps them retain the message.
- It is important to let your employees speak and express their thoughts. Keep an open mind. This can help you determine if there are any other issues around the topic that might be relevant – such as concern about equipment or processes.
- Once the talk is concluded have everyone sign and date the attendance sheet and file it with your records.

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Five things you should know about machine guarding.

(One for each finger you'll keep)

Today's safety talk is about the very familiar subject of machine guarding.

Everyone who has ever worked around machinery knows that guards are used to protect the operator from injury. There are some very good reasons for this. Here are a few of them.

1. The Facts.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 1100 workers in the United States were killed last year by contact with equipment or by being caught up in running machinery. That's 20% of all fatalities in the workplace. Over a thousand people killed in ways that could have been prevented. While the workplace is becoming safer in many other ways, (for example, the number of days lost due to illness or injury has been falling steadily over the years) the statistics for fatalities caused by contact with equipment and running machinery have remained high. All of us need to work harder at safety in this area.

2. The Hierarchy of Controls.

Every machine that has exposed points of operation, or rotating parts, or that shoots off chips or sparks, is a potential hazard to the people who work or around it. What is the best way to deal with this hazard? With any safety question, the guiding principle is to follow the Hierarchy of Controls. This means that we first look for ways to either eliminate the risk altogether or provide engineering controls to protect workers at risk from the hazard.

Machine guards are a form of engineering control. All machinery must have a guard in place at every point of potential contact.

3. Be Aware Of All Hazards.

Before you begin any task, follow these six steps to make sure you are protected:

Step one: From a safe place, take a good look around noting all the actions of the machine.

Step two: Plan how you are going to perform the task. Imagine yourself doing it.

Step three: Picture where you will be located and how you will move while performing the task. Where will you begin? Where will you do the work? Where will you finish?

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Step four: Identify all potential hazards. Can you see:

- Pinch points?
- Objects that can hit you?
- Things you can get caught in?
- Things you can be pushed against?
- Equipment under pressure?
- Contact with electricity or heat?
- Sheer points or compression points?
- Any other hazards such as chemicals?

Step five: Identify your body position. Visualize where you will be standing. Will you be reaching or bending? How will your body move?

Step six: Now, take each hazard you have identified and ask if any part of your body is exposed. Can I strike against, get caught in, get struck by, make contact with, get pinched by or asphyxiated by any part of the machine? If the answer is “yes”, or even “maybe”, to any part of this question then you are exposed. Do not perform the task. Call your supervisor.

4. Take Your Time.

Being in a hurry is asking for trouble. This is a factor that comes up time and time again in reports on serious incidents. Don't be tempted to reach around or bypass a machine guard just because you are pressured by time. Take it easy.

5. Make Safety Number One.

Make safety your number one priority. Take a safety first attitude on the job and take that same attitude with you when you go home. Respect the machine guards that are in place on the equipment in your shop or garage such as table saws, drill presses and lawn mowers.

We are so familiar with the machines that surround us every day that we can sometimes forget their inherent strength and power. Machines are fast. Machines are strong. Machines are sharp. And machines are stupid.

If a human body gets in the way of a machine, the human body is going to suffer. The reason is painfully obvious. A machine can do to your body the same thing it does to materials. It can cut, compress, shock, pinch, punch and burn to cause serious injuries and death.

Stay alert. Don't take foolish chances. Use your brain to beat the machine's brawn. You'll always be the winner.

