



How to Avoid Pinch Point Injuries

A worker, who lacked proper training, was operating an old and malfunctioning multi-punch press without adequate safeguards. These three unsafe conditions led the worker to reach across a pinch point to reposition the malfunctioning part. When the punch press cycled, his hand was caught between the top of the ram and the machine housing, resulting in crushing injuries to three of his fingers.

What is a Pinch Point?

A pinch point is any place where a body part can be caught between two objects moving towards each other. These hazards are often associated with power presses, conveyors, and other moving equipment, but they can exist anywhere. Examples include the space between a closing door and its jamb or between materials being unloaded and the surface they are being placed on. Even nipping your fingers with pliers would be a pinch point injury. These injuries can range from minor bruises to severe amputations or even death.

How to Avoid Pinch Point Injuries

Here are some ways to protect yourself from pinch point injuries:

- Identify potential pinch points before starting a task and before using any tool.
- Never operate equipment or machinery without the necessary machine guards.
- Do not reach around, under, or through a guard.
- Follow the company's lockout/tagout procedures and ensure that equipment is de-energized before repairing, unjamming, or adjusting any equipment.
- Be mindful of where you place your hands and feet. Are they between anything?
- Notice objects around you.
- What would happen if a load moves or shifts unexpectedly?
- Will you be in the way?
- Pay attention when walking or working in areas with mobile equipment and fixed structures.
- Ensure operators see and acknowledge you when working in areas with mobile equipment.
- Do not use your feet to brace or chock objects, such as holding open a door.
- When placing a heavy object down, make sure your feet and hands are safely out of the way.

Conclusion

Potential pinch points are everywhere. Discuss potential hazards with your supervisor and co-workers, and stay alert even when performing small tasks. Pinch point injuries often occur when workers are distracted.

