



# LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN

## *Personal Protective Equipment for Hands*

Landscape and horticultural workers are exposed to many hazards while performing their duties. Some of the most common injuries sustained are hand and finger wounds. While these injuries cannot be eliminated, an employer can reduce the number and severity of injuries by taking some pro-active steps.

### **The OSHA Standard**

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulates worker safety as it relates to hand protection via OSHA standard 1910.138. Essentially, it states that employers must select and require employees to use the appropriate gloves when the job exposes employees to cuts, lacerations, burns, harmful temperatures and/or the absorption of harmful substances. NOTE: Other state and local laws may apply. Employers should consider consulting trade associations as well as a lawyer familiar with OSHA, state and local safety regulations for additional information.

### **What Gloves to Use**

Unlike personal protective equipment for head, eyes and feet, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has no standard for gloves, so OSHA doesn't have specific standards either.

OSHA does recommend that selection be based "upon the tasks to be performed and the performance and construction characteristics of the glove material". This means based on the employer's review of the activities involved in a particular job, the employer should select the appropriate gloves. For example:

- Fabric gloves for protection against dirt, slivers, chafing & abrasions.
- Leather gloves for handling sharp, rough objects & exposure to sustained heat.
- Synthetic/neoprene gloves for working with pesticides and chemicals.

Whatever the selection, ***the key is that the gloves must fit properly. Gloves that are too large and hang make things less safe*** by getting caught in machinery and causing a severe laceration, amputation or worse.

*(over)*

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## Preventative Measures

The most obvious ways to prevent finger and hand injuries is to train employees not to use them as tools. Workers often don't think twice about using their fingers to remove objects from parts that have pinch, cut and crush points. Employers should demonstrate the proper method of performing various tasks so that employees have a full grasp of the procedures to follow for any given situation. Also, since speed and convenience is often the reason why employees take risks even when they know the safe way to perform a task, it's up to the employer to make clear that the time spent doing things safely is valued more than the time saved doing things in a dangerous manner.



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