TOOLBOXTALK

PINCH POINTS

A pinch point is any place where part of your body can be caught between two objects or between a moving object and something that does not move. You may also hear terms such as nip point, caught in, caught between, crushing, or shearing. Pinch points are not limited to machinery. They develop whenever equipment, tools, or materials move, rotate, close, lower, shift, or unexpectedly release.

WHERE ARE THE PINCH POINTS?

In our work, pay particular attention to:

- MEWPs approaching walls or structures
- Scaffold components during assembly
- Materials being lifted, lowered or positioned
- Doors, gates, hinges and latches
- Rotating or reciprocating power tools
- Hoists, ropes, pulleys and drums
- Outriggers and stabilizing equipment
- Hydraulic equipment during movement
- Materials being stacked or unloaded
- Loads that can swing or shift
- Hands beneath materials being set

Pinch points often develop while we are trying to control something with our hands. We guide material into position, steady a load, align two components, hold something while another worker adjusts it, or reach into a tight space to make the final connection. If the material shifts, equipment moves, or a coworker acts before expected, the space your hand was occupying can disappear instantly.

A "PINCH" CAN BE A SERIOUS INJURY

The name can make the hazard sound minor, but it is not. Depending on the amount of force involved, the result can be a fracture, crush injury, degloving, amputation, or death. A glove may reduce cuts or abrasion, but it cannot protect your hand from crushing force.

The best time to recognize a pinch point is before anything moves. Look at where the object is now, where it is going, and what it could move against. Think about what could swing, roll, rotate, drop, close, or shift unexpectedly. Most importantly, decide where your hands, feet, and body will be during the movement.

If the task requires your hand to be where two objects could come together, change the method. Use a handle, tool, tag line, blocking, mechanical assistance, or another means of controlling the material without putting part of your body in the pinch point. Make sure everyone involved understands who is controlling the movement and when movement will begin.



DO

- Identify pinch points before movement.
- Keep hands clear while positioning materials.
- Communicate before equipment or loads move.
- Use tools instead of hands when possible.
- Maintain clearance from fixed objects.

DON'T

- Use hands to stop moving materials.
- Reach beneath suspended or unsupported loads.
- Stand between equipment and fixed objects.
- Put fingers between aligning components.
- Rely on gloves against crushing forces.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What creates a pinch point?

   a) Two objects coming together

2. Where do we commonly encounter pinch points?

   a) Equipment, materials, tools, fixed objects

3. What should you do if controlling material puts your hand in a pinch point?

   a) Change the method; keep hands clear

References: OSHA, *Machine Guarding: Hazardous Motions and Actions*; OSHA, *Construction Focus Four: Caught In or Between Hazards*; OSHA, *Hazard Identification Training Tool: Construction.*

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