

Protective Clothing and Equipment

Gloves

According to the National Safety Council, hands are the body parts most frequently injured on the job. Many of these injuries can be avoided if you follow precautions and wear the proper hand protection for your job.

Make the Right Match

Whether you work with heat, sharp or abrasive objects, strong chemicals, or electrical or biological hazards, be sure to use the gloves that are right for your job. This is especially important in the case of chemical and electrical hazards, which require specific types of gloves. Gloves for working around electrical hazards are color-coded for their resistance to different levels of voltage, while gloves for chemical hazards are designed to resist the chemicals you are working with; gloves made of the wrong material could literally dissolve before your eyes. You must wear fire-retardant gloves around open flame, while reflective gloves (such as aluminized gloves) are best for intense radiant heat. Use this chart, along with your supervisor's recommendation, to help select the right glove for your work.

Other Hand Protection

In addition to gloves, you may be required to protect your hands and forearms with hand pads (for extreme heat, roughness, splinters), finger guards, or long cuffs or forearm protectors. Barrier creams increase the glove's protection against chemicals or may be used to protect against mild chemical exposure when gloves cannot be worn.

Using Gloves Properly

Make sure you wear gloves that are the right size. Gloves that are too small tire your hands and wear out quickly, while too-large gloves interfere with your dexterity and increase the likelihood of an accident. Check with your supervisor

Hazard	Gloves
mild heat, cold, sharp edges	fabric gloves
electricity	rubber gloves with insulated liners (color-coded for high-voltage protection)
chemicals, corrosives	rubber, neoprene, vinyl
sparks, rough surfaces, scraping	leather gloves
extreme heat	leather, wool, terry cloth, glass fiber, aluminized fabric
radiation	lead-lined gloves
knives, sharp cutting edges	metal-mesh gloves
food handling, health services	disposable plastic

before wearing gloves around machinery with moving parts—they can get caught.

Chemical Gloves: Care Is Critical

Gloves used to protect against chemicals and corrosive substances require special treatment. Inspect them carefully before each use and don't use them if they are torn, cracked or swollen from exposure to solvents. Rinse them before taking them off and clean them thoroughly before putting them away, so that chemical residue doesn't build up on them. Store them away from light, right side out, with the cuff unfolded—this allows remaining chemical vapors to escape more easily. Wash your hands thoroughly, even though you've been wearing gloves.

The most important way to protect yourself is to pay attention to what you're doing. Stay alert to hand safety hazards, follow guidelines for equipment use, and use the right gloves for the situation. 

