

Key Components of Machine Safety Part 2

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Don't depend on signs and guards for your workers' safety. Supervise, Instruct, and Train. Image courtesy of mysafetysign.com

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2009, there were more than 6000 work-related nonfatal amputations in the United States. The primary source of these injuries...improperly guarded machinery. To protect yourself and your workers, make sure machinery used on a jobsite has the proper guards attached.

Guards should be secure, strong, and unable to be tampered with by workers. A properly installed guard should meet these requirements:

✂ **Never create hazards** - A guard should never create hazards. Make sure guard edges are rolled or bolted to eliminate sharp or jagged edges.

✂ **Never interfere** - The guard should never interfere with the operator getting the job done safely and efficiently.

✂ **Prevent contact** - A guard should protect the operator's limbs from any dangerous moving part on the machine.

✂ **Protect** - A guard should protect the machine from falling objects while also protecting workers from objects deflecting off the machine.

✂ **Secure** - The guard should be made of a durable material. It should be strong and unable to be tampered with or removed by a worker.

There are several types of guards. When choosing a guard, consider where it will be and on what type of machine. Also, make sure when choosing a guard, it will not interfere with the operator's job. Interference can cause irritation leading to guards being taken off or tampered with.

The different types of guards include:

✂ **Fixed guard** - This type of guard permanently encloses the point of operation or hazardous area. It acts as a barrier, allowing stock to be fed into the machine while preventing the operator from entering the area of danger.

✂ **Adjustable guard** - This guard allows barrier adjustments for a variety of operations and accommodation of various sizes of stock.

✂ **Self-adjusting guard** - This type of guard incorporates moveable parts and moves depending on the size of the stock being fed into the machine. The guard sits in place when the machine is at rest, but moves when stock enters the point of operation.

✂ **Interlocking guard** - This type of guard is similar to a fixed guard, but allows access to machine setup, adjustment, or jam removal without having to remove the guard. It will cause the machine to shut off if the guard is opened or moved, and will not allow the machine to startup until the guard is in its proper place.

✂ **Tunnel guard** - This type of guard is in the shape of a tunnel or chute. It allows material to be inserted into the machinery, but due to design prevents operator limbs from entering the danger area.

Guards can help protect your workers, but they are inanimate objects and cannot be solely depended upon for safety. Effective supervision, instruction, and training are all key components to keeping your workers safe.

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