Machinery in Motion



Safety Talk

Machines move to perform their work. Consider a conveyor belt moving raw material to a holding tank, or a drill punching its way through a piece of wood. Injuries from machines stem from operator error and caught-between hazards.

In this Safety Talk, we'll discuss what happens during a caught-between incident, how to avoid hazardous situations when working with machinery, and provide some tips on how to work around machinery without getting hurt.

What Can Go Wrong
A California printing company's high-ranking officials were charged with manslaughter in connection with the death of a pregnant worker. A machine she was reaching into suddenly turned on and crushed her. Prosecutors claim that the woman hadn't received the correct training to operate the machine. Additionally, the machine was not equipped with proper safety devices.

This tragedy could have been prevented. Many caught-between injuries and fatalities occur because workers put their hands or other body parts into the machinery. They get caught between the moving parts, or fail to use proper safety procedures to clear a jam.

Deaths are far from infrequent and workers who survive horrific injuries such as limb amputations are affected for the rest of their lives.

How to Protect Yourself
Even properly guarded machines can be dangerous to operate. Workers need safety training to recognize hazardous machine actions so they can avoid injury. Following the written safe work practices provided for machinery also keeps caught-between injuries at bay.

Stay safe by following these machinery safety tips:

- Only use the machinery if you've been trained and are authorized to do so.
- Know how to stop the machinery before you start it.
- Check to see if the area around the machine is tidy and free of obstructions.
- Wear the required personal protective equipment (PPE), such as safety

footwear and eyewear.
- Don’t wear loose clothing or jewelry and keep long hair restrained so it can’t get caught in moving parts and pull you in.
- Ensure all machine guards are fitted correctly and securely and are kept maintained.
- Only remove or disable machine guards when the machine requires maintenance or repair. Make sure lockout/tagout procedures are followed.
- Never attempt to start a machine that has a lockout tag on it.
- Make sure the machine is in working order before using it. If you discover any problems, let your supervisor know.
- Report any machine malfunctions immediately to your supervisor.
- Never put your hands in a machine to clear a jam.

If you’re not operating machinery, then stay clear of the area when machines are running. Never enter the immediate work area unless you have established eye or verbal contact with the operator.

FINAL WORD

Workplace machinery is often fast and powerful. It’s strong enough to bend, cut, crush and otherwise mutilate wood, metal, glass, plastic and other materials. The human body is no match. Use the tips and suggestions in this Safety talk to stay safe when working around machines.