

LOSS CONTROL NEWSLETTER

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Auto-Owners
INSURANCE

Don't Get Caught: Protect Yourself From Caught-In Hazards

The construction industry's "Fatal Four" (falls, struck-by object, electrocutions, and caught-in) account for most worker deaths in the industry. If you are exposed to these hazards at work, you should know how to recognize them and what safe work practices can keep you injury-free.

Let's take a closer look at common situations where there are caught-in hazards, which is when a worker is caught inside or between different objects, or is caught inside the parts of an object or equipment.

HEAVY EQUIPMENT: Never enter the area between a large piece of equipment, such as a backhoe, bulldozer or excavator, and an immovable object, like a wall. For rotating equipment, like a crane, never enter the area that the load carried by the equipment may swing into (i.e., the swing radius). In both of these situations, you may become pinned between the equipment and the wall or other immovable objects. Before beginning the job, you should define zones that workers should not enter using barricades. Additionally, when approaching heavy equipment, be sure that the operator can see you and that the equipment is turned off completely.

TOOLS: Many tools have guards, and larger equipment may have machine guards installed that protect the operator from getting caught in moving parts or being pulled into the machinery. These guards should never be removed. You should also never use equipment that has missing or damaged guards.

When working with tools, work at a safe distance from moving parts, being careful that your fingers, gloves, jewelry, clothing and long hair do not get too close to the moving parts. If a tool or equipment must be serviced, you should follow the proper lockout/tagout procedures.

MATERIAL HANDLING: When manually moving materials, you can potentially pinch or crush your toes or fingers when unloading the object to the ground, a shelf or another location. Before you unload, make sure your fingers and toes are not underneath the object. When stacking large pieces of material, you might become trapped between the material; or, if you stack objects in an unstable manner, you can be caught under a fallen load.

TRENCHES AND EXCAVATION: If a trench cave-in occurs, workers can be trapped, buried or crushed by the soil. Protective systems should be put in place. These systems may include trench shoring to prevent the movement of soil and trench shielding to prevent the worker from being crushed if there is a cave-in. There can also be other caught-in hazards, depending on the work being done in the trench, such as laying pipe. Always use caution when working in and around trenches or other excavations.

By being aware of the caught-in hazards present at your jobsite and implementing safe work practices, you can prevent becoming a casualty of the "Fatal Four."



Metalworking Fluids

There are over 1.2 million workers in machine finishing, machine tooling, and other metalworking and metal-forming operations. If you are one of them, you probably work with metalworking fluids (MWFs), the oils and other liquids that are used to lubricate and cool metal during machining.

Another purpose of MWFs is the continuous removal of chips and swarf created by cutting tools during machining. Many MWFs are petroleum-based that may or may not be mixed with water, but some are synthetic. You should know what is in the MWFs you work with, and you can get this information from the safety data sheets.

EXPOSURE

Metalworkers can be exposed to MWFs if the mist, aerosols or vapors are inhaled; if they contact skin when fluid splashes or mists; or when workers handle wet workpieces and tools. If you use a rag that may be contaminated with MWFs, you should not store it in your pocket. To avoid ingestion, always wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking.

Exposure levels will vary depending on how the fluid is applied and what kind of machining is being performed. However, your exposure may be increased if you work in close proximity to the machine, if the

work involves deep or fast cuts, or if the ventilation is poor.

HEALTH EFFECTS

Breathing in MWFs can lead to asthma, bronchitis or the development of other respiratory conditions. When skin comes in contact with MWFs, common effects can include skin irritation, allergic reactions and oil acne. If small metal particles are present in the MWF, it can damage the skin, making irritation worse.

Commonly, there is bacterial growth in MWFs, and breathing this contamination can lead to flu-like symptoms. Biocides are sometimes used to control the growth of bacteria, but some release the carcinogen formaldehyde.

If you have any questions or need assistance regarding workplace safety, please contact your independent insurance agent or the Auto-Owners Loss Control HelpLine at 855.586.5388, or send an email to LossControlSupport@aoins.com.

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