

Amputations in the Workplace



Amputations are a very serious health and safety concern in the workplace. OSHA reports there is an average of seven amputations that occur in US workplaces every single day. More than 90 percent of the amputations involved fingers, but there were also amputations of the hands, toes, feet, and other body parts. There are many hazards in the workplace that can result in amputations.

Mechanical Locations

- **Point of operation** - This is where a machine is performing work on a material. Some examples of points of operation include a razor cutting fabric, a mechanical press bending metal, or a drill bit cutting holes in metal sheeting.
- **Power transmission apparatuses** - Includes machine components that transmit energy. Some examples include pulleys, belts, chains, flywheels, cams, gears, and connecting rods.
- **Other machinery parts** - Any machinery part that moves with enough force to cut flesh and bone is a hazard that can result in an amputation. This would include any parts that reciprocate, rotate, or traverse moving parts.

Safeguards Against Amputations

- **Elimination** - Eliminate any hazards that can cause an amputation injury to avoid the possibility of the injury occurring to any individual.

- **Engineering controls** - Where there are moving parts, ensure there is proper guarding around the hazard. Use barriers or fences to keep individuals out of areas where there are many moving parts or machinery. Use safety devices that shut off the machine if a person enters a dangerous area. Other safety devices, such as ones that will not allow a machine to function unless the operator's hands are in a safe position, can also be effective in preventing amputation injuries.
- **Administrative controls** - Employees should be trained on recognizing the hazards in their workplace that cause amputations. A lock-out/tag-out program is another example of an administrative control to prevent injury when servicing equipment that has moving parts.
- **Personal precautions** - Do not stick your hands where you cannot see them. Do not bypass guards or work on live equipment. Also, avoid wearing loose clothing or jewelry that could pull your fingers or other body parts into moving equipment.

Summary

Be aware of the different hazards that can cause amputation injuries in the workplace. Focus on eliminating as many of these hazards as possible, then look to use effective engineering controls to protect yourself and coworkers from amputation injuries. Not every single hazard may be eliminated in your workplace, so always be aware of your surroundings and never put yourself in a situation where an injury is more likely to occur.

