TRENDS IN ... HAND PROTECTION

The influence of technology

By Tracy Haas Depa, assistant editor

Work-related hand injuries are common: In 2014, 36,540 wrist injuries and 119,810 hand injuries requiring days away from work were recorded, according to the 2017 edition of "Injury Facts," a National Safety Council chartbook. Here, industry insiders offer their thoughts on recent innovations in the hand protection field and how misuse can be prevented.

What's new

Technology is playing a big role in hand protection trends. Chris Smith, director of marketing and inside sales for Collierville, TN-based MCR Safety, spoke of D3O. "This innovative technology provides users with the most advanced impact protection," he said. "D3O's smart elastomer technology provides superior energy absorption, reducing impact to a user's hand by up to 50 percent of the transmitted force applied."

Rodney Taylor, industrial PPE global sales and marketing manager for Croydon, England-based D3O, discussed material-related innovations. "There are new glove offerings entering the market on a regular basis," Taylor said. "There is a wide array of materials being used for back-of-hand (dorsal) impact protection on industrial gloves, including various forms of thermoplastic rubbers, silicone rubbers, foams and elastomers."

Steve Genzer, president of the industrial global business unit for Iselin, NJ-based Ansell, discussed the growing need for "chemical PPE" that also provides cut protection. "New technology has created chemical gloves with improved durability, reliability and cut-resistance," Genzer said. "Innovative nitrile coating, combined with lightweight cut-resistant liners, allow for dual protection while still remaining comfortable on the hand for workers."

Misuse – and how to avoid it

Loren Rivkin, executive vice president for Saf-T-Gard International Inc., based in Northbrook, IL, said that although ANSI ISEA 105-2016 is a big improvement over the previous version, a considerable amount of confusion exists regarding what level of cut protection is needed for a particular job. "Some users arbitrarily pick a cut level that they think they need," Rivkin said, adding that others "start with a cut level too high and move down for comfort and/or price, while others start with a low cut level and work their way up via trials."

However, this isn't the best strategy. Rivkin notes that many leading hand protection manufacturers have developed "glove selection tools or matrices with lists of industries and applications that can help users focus on the best glove for the task."

Another common problem is workers removing their gloves altogether, said Jill Clements, global account manager for Wilmington, DE-based DuPont Kevlar and current chair of the ANSI/ISEA Hand Protection Committee. "All too often, gloves are viewed as a 'one-size-fits-all' for the variety of tasks required at a given facility, when, in reality, the glove should be selected for the task," Clements said.

Workers also can misuse hand protection by wearing two gloves at once. "A standard industry practice is to don a thick chemical glove over a lightweight cut protective glove for a safety solution," Genzer said. "However, that's not effective protection. In fact, it's inefficient and often unsafe, as it removes tactility and breathability for the worker." To correct this, Genzer recommends ensuring workers have the right gloves for the job before work begins.

Comfort is key

"Comfort equals compliance" is a common refrain in the PPE industry, and it holds true for hand protection. "Making sure that the glove offers the protection needed (cut, thermal, puncture, impact, etc.) for the risks involved is important, but also making sure the glove is comfortable and provides the worker with dexterity, to ensure they leave it on, is just as important," Clements said.

Fortunately for workers, glove manufacturers know this. "Ultra-lightweight cut-resistant liners and breathable materials have made cut and chemical gloves with the highest industry-standard levels of protection light and comfortable for the worker," Genzer said.

Compiled with the assistance of the International Safety Equipment Association

COMING NEXT MONTH

Eyewashes/showers

Performance work glove ➤

The KARBONHEX KX-01 DUSK is an extremely close-fitting, lightweight glove with hexgrip profile enhancements to key fingertip and palm grip points with added anti-abrasion zones to the form-fitting rear of the glove. The glove is ultra-thin at 0.5 millimeters and has conductive fingertips, allowing workers to use touchscreen devices.

Safety INXS

Circle 105 on Reader Service Card