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Greetings!

Before Covid 2020, UTP distributed a quarterly newsletter entitled *Safety Spot*. Its intentions were to keep UTP representatives and safety program administrators informed of recent injury claims summaries other updates according to Julie Vigos, who created the framework and graphics as well. My part, as it turned out, was to re-interpret original or adaptable safety content in ways that more directly apply to components, contexts, situations, and attributes that are unique to our lines of work. That intention continues in the topic below.

While the first and original *Safety Spot* was a one-way initiative, UTP's recent adoption of monthly safety meetings invites an interactive forum, whereby discussion and feedback can affect more informed and relevant Safety Spot issues to come.

Enjoy this Q2 2022 edition of Safety Spot!

Truly,

Ladd Anderson



ENSURING AGAINST HAND and FINGER TRAUMA IN THE WORKPLACE

Hand and finger injuries are frequent risks during “hands on” load in, load out, truck loading and other operations. Workers suffering serious hand or finger injuries can remain restrictively compromised even after extensive therapy, both in future work capability and in daily living activities formerly taken for granted. Lack of appropriate PPE, inexperience, lack of situational awareness, and lapses of attention are critical contributors to impact and abrasion trauma that adherence to principles and vigilance can effectively prevent.

Dr. Gregory A. Merrell, a surgeon at the Indiana Hand Center and surgery treatment and surgical training center, says that the most frequently encountered types of hand injuries include

- Cuts or abrasions and impact trauma
- Overuse or repetitive-motion injuries
- Amputation

Specific to our lines of work, hand trauma is a comparatively regular injury class, with incidences most likely to occur during

- truck loading operations
- installations of temporary staging support structures and deckage
- arena temporary flooring changeouts
- scaffolding install and takedown operations
- the handling of rolling cases, wheeled cages, hampers, open racks; freight or other wheeled conveyances aka WCs, see below:

As the risk of a hand injury situation can arise anywhere, the development of habits that include the following strategies can reduce risk potential in any “hands on” working environment.

Note: With exposure to any set of safety principles, the most important attribute everyone can aspire to is the ability to remain situationally aware and present while engaged in any “hands on” work related activity. It is in this mental state that learned safety principles are most likely to spontaneously occur. Hand position mindfulness can also be remarkably affected by simply familiarizing the following behaviors:

Installing and removing portable stage supports and decking:

- *Always wear gloves when handling and installing removeable stage supports and decking*
- *Be familiar with and mindful of proper lifting and hand placement techniques.*
- *Before positioning your hands to make a lift, anticipate possible pinch or crush points if something slips, and place your hands in a way that eliminates hand injury potential.*
- *When managing braces, uprights, cross members, or collapsible scaffolding, never place or “wrap” your fingers around a member in a way that they can possibly be pinched, scraped, or crushed against anything else.*
- *Maintain communication with fellow workers, so that all lifts and hand placements are smooth and coordinated.*
- *Don’t hurry. Anticipate potential crush points, and make every hand placement conscious, deliberate and safe.*
- *When handling stage decking, never position your hands where they can be pinched, scraped, or crushed against each other or supporting structures, and always when stacking or closing stage components into place.*
- *Always be mindful of proximity, and always keep hands away from the moving parts of powered lift equipment and masts.*
- *When approaching a forklift-managed loads, stand away with hands off until the load completely landed, and the forklift has disengaged.*

Notify appropriate personnel of jagged edges or welds, burrs, damaged butterfly latches handles, hinges, or lids, loosened or broken castors or other anomaly that could potentially contribute to contribute to hand, loss of control, or any other injury.

Handling road cases, racks, hampers, and all other wheeled conveyances (WCs):

Note: While the following *italicized* points are hand injury specific, more general WC control principles are also included:

- *Always wear gloves when working with WCs.*
- *Never attempt to relocate a WC you can’t see around or safely control without help.*
- *Never accelerate a WC beyond a steady, controlled walk.*
- *Never leave a WC unattended or insecurely blocked on an unlevel surface.*
- *When pushing or pulling a WC, maintain situational awareness to anticipate collision potential with other stuff in the workspace.*
- *Engage racks, cages, and strapped carts with fingers outside or positioned in a way that eliminates crush potential from shifting contents.*
- *When handling rolling freight, develop the habit of positioning your hands on push points between the corners and sides. Remember that hands positioned inside a perimeter can’t be trapped in the event of a collision.*

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- Always maintain adequate stopping distance between your WC and persons or objects ahead.
- *When stacking WCs requires the adjustment of a castor wheel into a wheel pocket or “doughnut” on a supporting lid, do it from the outside corner, and never reach between components the components of any WC stack for any reason. Always ensure the supporting component is stable, that others are aware of what you are doing, and that the stack isn’t moved until you say “clear”.*
- *Notify appropriate personnel of broken straps, butterfly latches, hinges, jagged edges, welds, burrs or other anomalies that could result in a hand or other injury.*
- *Add anything that may have been missed or inadequately explained in this letter.*

A study wherein retirees from machine, cabinet and wood shops were ask how they had survived their careers with all their fingers, most stated that once they had decided on a safe and thoughtful way to approach the machinery, they simply never deviated from the system, never to took shortcuts, or “rushed” the plan. Retirees who had lost fingers or worse mostly cited “doing something stupid” and “taking short cuts” as primary reasons for their injuries.

Working when mentally or physically tired or preoccupied were also cited as contributing factors.

By thinking about and applying preventive strategies, glove protection and awareness, UTP can mostly eliminate hand injury risks from all our working environments.

For Safety,

Ladd Anderson
Risk Management Program contributor

We would like to reach as many relevant people as possible with this safety tool. Please send email addresses of any stewards, safety committee members or other stagehands who may be interested in receiving the Safety Spot to julie@utpgroup.com

A Tale of our accidents

The following is a list of incidents and accidents that have occurred in the last several months.

Arizona: #1 - Nobody was securing the remaining deck pieces on the cart, so they fell and sprained the thumb and landed on his foot.

South Carolina: #1 - While taking down a stage that had not work lights; employee fell. They were able to land partially on the stage on their lefthand side. Employee is currently missing work.

California: #1 - While loading a set piece into a truck the load bar fell onto their shoulder/collarbone. Employee is currently awaiting surgery.

#2: Employees were pushing boxes into a freight elevator. Employees left index finger was hit by another case and crushed between them breaking it. Employee will miss at least 4 weeks of work.

Oklahoma: #1 - While pushing a meat cart it rolled over her right big toe fracturing it. Employee had to have surgery and was out of work for 3 months

Oregon: #1 - While pushing sound consoles said she strained her shoulder. Was out of work for a couple of months.

Alabama: #1 - On the loading dock where they were moving ramps. A ramp that was propped up behind her fell striking her down the back of her ankle and heel.

Georgia: #1 - Employee was working on truss on the floor, a 6ft tall chain link fence fell on him causing a laceration and concussion resulting in a 3-day ICU stay.

#2 - While helping to push a genie lift on the sidewalk, there was a brick missing and the genie lift fell over hitting the lower leg.

North Carolina: #1 - While loading decking onto a cart, thumb was smashed between the decking and the cart. Caused a laceration on her thumb requiring stitches and her missing work.

A Tale of our accidents - Continued

Texas: #1 - Injured worker was pulling ropes from the ceiling and hurt his shoulder and is currently awaiting surgery.

#2 - While working in a scissor lift employee had finished bolting the beam when the scissor lift jolted and smashed his fingers. It broke two fingers and lacerated them. Employee had 18 stitches besides the fractures.

Florida: #1 - While unloading trucks got middle finger smashed between two boxes tearing off the finger pad. Employee has been out of work for two months so far.

#2 - While turning a storage box wheels up it got stuck in the wheel well and his right finger got caught smashing it causing a laceration that needed stitches. Employee is out of work.

#3 - Pushing LED cart up a ramp and had severe lower back pain. He is currently missing work.

The following is a chart received from our insurance company regarding our recent losses:

