

Machine Safe Guarding – Think Before You Operate

The thought, “it will only take a minute,” has led to many catastrophic accidents related to shortcuts in machine safeguarding practices. Reduce machine-related accidents by keeping guards in place, note hazards where additional guards are necessary, and follow lockout procedures.

Be alert to these basic safety practices when working around or operating equipment. Most accidents occur on equipment that has been properly guarded when someone removes a guard or safeguarding device or does not follow the lockout procedure properly. Every person must follow the lockout procedures and play a role in machine safety.

- Devices like two-hand control buttons and light curtains help to keep hands out of the point of operation while equipment is moving. Check the controls at the start of each shift and report any problems or defects with the controls.
- Don't wear rings, long-sleeve clothes, or long hair around any equipment with rotating tooling or moving parts. People have been caught and pulled into equipment by even small or slow-turning shafts and parts.
- Guards, safety devices, and controls protect the operator and other people. Report any missing guards, loose guards, or makeshift changes to your supervisor before operating any equipment at the start of the day, or any other time.
- Never attempt to free jammed or stuck parts unless the machine is properly locked out and secured.
- Never try to start or re-activate any machine that is shut off, or has a guard removed but does not have a lock or tag. Someone may have forgotten to attach their lock or tag. This is a common error in many lockout-related accidents.
- Only authorized and trained people should service, repair, or maintain equipment. These are generally maintenance and set up workers. An employee must be on the company's list of authorized employees before performing this work.
- Only trained people who are familiar with potential hazards and safe practices should operate equipment. Beware of the danger zones located within an operation. Don't become complacent regarding machine hazards, even with smaller equipment.
- People without proper authorization and training should never try to operate any machine with a lock or tag on it. If in doubt, ask a supervisor. It only takes a minute to avoid a catastrophic accident.