

# PLAYING IT SAFE

Kirby-Vass Insulation, Inc.  
#585

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## Save Your Hands

*Tips for reducing the risk of injury to your hands*

When working in construction, your hands are involved in almost every task you perform, making them highly susceptible to sudden or chronic injuries. Yet, workers rarely make an effort to protect their hands against ergonomic hazards, and suffer later because of it! In fact, these injuries account for many hours of lost work and millions in workers' compensation claims and medical bills.

### What Causes Injuries?

Ergonomic hazards that trigger injuries to the hands, wrists and fingers include repetitive motions, placing too much stress on body parts and excessive twisting. To combat injuries, specifically those from motions causing ergonomic problems, consider the following.

### Safety Precautions

- Alternate between different activities throughout the day to vary your body movements.
- Concentrate on cutting down on unnecessary movements whenever possible.
- Arrange your workstation so that tools are within easy reach.
- Adjust the angle of your work surface to keep your wrists straight.
- Try to keep your hands and wrists in a neutral position (similar to when shaking hands). This limits the strain on your muscles and tendons, and reduces the temptation to flex or bend at the wrist.
- Give your elbows and wrists a rest

periodically throughout the day.

- Avoid muscle fatigue by shifting work between your two hands and by varying your routines.
- Stretch periodically throughout the day to keep your muscles loose.
- Use tools that have smooth or padded handles. These add-ons will provide additional comfort and will lessen the risk of pinching. Also, look for tools that are designed to keep your wrists straight and are long enough so that they extend across your palm.
- Watch out for wire cutters or pliers that spread your hands too far. The distance between your hands and fingers should only be approximately four to five inches (for an average-sized hand).
- Select gripping tools such as hammers that have a handle diameter of no more than two inches to avoid straining to grip the tool.
- Use power tools that allow your middle finger or thumb to control the trigger as opposed to the index finger. This will allow your index finger to balance the tool without having to also control the trigger.
- When possible, avoid using tools that give off excessive vibrations. This can cause circulation damage, pinched nerves and stressed tendons. If you must work with these types of tools, wear insulated gloves to absorb some of the vibrations.



### Select the Right Tools

Using ergonomically-friendly tools will limit the hazard exposure to your hands, wrists and fingers. They will not only be more comfortable to use in the long run, they will also reduce the risk of injuries.

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