

Workplace  
Health *and*  
Safety *basics*  
*for*  
**PROCESSING**  
**FACTORY**  
**WORKERS**



Rights  
Responsibilities  
Problems  
*and* Solutions

**WORKPLACE  
SAFE**



*It's working*



## **DISCLAIMER**

The information in this booklet is for guidance only and is not to be taken as an expression of the law. It should be read in conjunction with the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*, the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998* and any other relevant legislation. Copies of the legislation can be purchased from the Printing Authority of Tasmania Bookshop: call (03) 6233 3289 or freecall 1 800 030 940. It is also available on the Internet at [www.thelaw.tas.gov.au](http://www.thelaw.tas.gov.au)

# INTRODUCTION

Workplace health and safety can be a challenge. If you work in a processing factory, you probably work with large and complex machinery, or unusual environments (such as extremes of heat or cold). You might work on a conveyor line, for example, and experience time pressures and production deadlines, repetitive work movements, heavy lifting, and sharp tools (such as knives).

A workplace injury can have a huge effect on your whole life. For people working in a processing factory, some of the body parts most affected by injury are the hands, finger and thumbs. Wrist and shoulder injuries are also very common.

So try doing these every day tasks — using either your ‘wrong’ hand, or with one hand tied behind your back — to see what it’s like having a hand or arm injury:

- do up a button or zipper
- make a cup of coffee or a pot of tea
- do your shoes up
- eat a meal, including cutting up food
- drive your car
- hang out the washing
- do your hair, brush your teeth, use the toilet
- take money out of your purse or wallet
- do any writing or computer work.

## WHY SHOULD I READ THIS GUIDE?

This guide will provide you with information about some of the common hazards you might face if you work in a processing factory and possible solutions for them. It also explains some of the consequences of suffering a workplace injury; in particular, a hand or arm injury. This booklet also outlines your health and safety rights and responsibilities, and explains how everyone is responsible for health and safety at their workplace.



# CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION..... 3**

**COULD THIS HAPPEN IN YOUR FACTORY?..... 6**

**WHO IS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY? ..... 8**

**WORKING TOGETHER ..... 10**

**HAZARDS TO YOUR HEALTH:..... 11**

# CONTENTS

<b>HAND AND ARM INJURIES.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>COMMON PROBLEMS — POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SAFETY HAZARD EXAMPLES .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>WANT MORE INFORMATION?.....</b>	<b>19</b>

# COULD THIS IN

**MARIA** was trying to adjust the out-feed side of a bread-slicing machine when her hand touched the machine's moving blades. As she tried to free her fingers, the blades amputated one of them. The safety guard — which would have prevented Maria's hand from making contact with the blades — was not fitted to the machine. Maria hadn't received adequate training, nor was she supervised.

**PHIL** was cleaning the rollers of a printing press. The rollers normally ran on the slow 'inch mode' during cleaning, to make the task easier; however Phil decided to run the rollers at their normal speed to save time. His fingers accidentally touched the rollers, and he was pulled into the rollers up to his wrist. Co-workers came to his rescue, but by the time they'd turned off the machine, Phil's hand was de-gloved: the skin from the wrist down was completely removed. Phil needed extensive plastic surgery, and couldn't work in his trade for 12 months.

**RASHED** was cleaning a biscuit-making machine and wanted to go home early. Even though he'd been properly trained by his employer, Rashed was eager to save time, so he didn't follow the correct procedures for isolating the machine first. He tried to clean the machine while it was running on a slow setting, but he touched a moving part, which amputated the end of his right index finger.

# HAPPEN YOUR FACTORY?

**JANNEKE** walked past a conveyor belt. She turned around, and her loose-fitting sleeve got caught in the belt's unguarded nip point. The fabric was pulled tight around her arm to such an extent that it cut through her muscle to the bone before a co-worker managed to stop the conveyor. As a result of these severe arm injuries, she was hospitalised and off work for many months.

**JOHNNY** was directed by his supervisor to clear a jam on a paper-recycling conveyor belt. He opened the guard that covered the drive mechanism, and started to clear the paper, when his arm and hand were dragged into the nip point of the roller. Johnny's arm was trapped and the belt of the conveyor had to be cut to free him. He suffered multiple fractures and muscle, skin and tendon damage. Surgery to save his arm was not successful, and the arm was amputated above the elbow.

**BRANDON** had a new job at a brick-making factory. He had no previous experience in factory work, but he was expected to help operate a tiling machine and learn on the job. Brandon's supervisor showed him how some of the buttons on the machine worked, but the noisy workplace made it difficult to hear. When the mixing bowl looked jammed, Brandon called for help (as he was told to), but he was offered no help or guidance. Because the machine's mixing blades were not moving, Brandon thought it was safe enough to try and clean it himself. But when he did, the blades started moving again, and his arm was trapped and crushed. He sustained serious and permanent loss of function in that hand and arm.

# WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY?

The simple answer is **everyone**.

## YOUR EMPLOYER

Your employer has the main responsibility for health and safety at your workplace. Your employer must make sure that your factory is safe and will not damage your health or that of your co-workers. This means:

- providing a safe workplace. This includes your physical work environment and the equipment and any chemicals you use, as well as the work methods and processes you use to do your job
- checking your workplace regularly for anything that may cause illness or injury, and fixing any problems as soon as possible
- providing you with the information, instruction, supervision and training you need to do your job safely
- talking with you, or talking to your elected employees' safety representatives about health and safety issues.

## YOU, THE FACTORY WORKER

There are things you need to do, too. To ensure your health and that of your co-workers, you must:

- follow any safety directions and work instructions your employer or supervisor gives you
- work with your employer and anyone else — such as your co-workers, your health and safety representative or a Workplace Standards Tasmania inspector — who can make your workplace safer
- use any personal protective equipment and clothing (such as gloves, earmuffs and safety boots) in the correct way
- report any hazards, accidents or near misses immediately for your employer or supervisor to investigate.

There are also things you must *not* do. For example, you must *not*:

- deliberately misuse or interfere with equipment
- remove guarding from machinery unless you and others have followed the necessary specific safe operating procedures
- be adversely affected by alcohol or recreational drugs (tell your employer if you are taking any prescription medication that could affect your ability to work safely).

If you don't follow these basic requirements, you could put your health and safety and that of your co-workers at risk. Like your employer, you have duties under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* and can be prosecuted.



# WORKING TOGETHER

Everyone in the workplace has a legal responsibility for workplace health and safety, and the best way to improve health and safety at work is by working together.

Working in processing factories involves working near heavy machinery or machinery that either moves or has moving parts. This entails some very specific safety problems. It's important that your employer, supervisor or elected employees' safety representative is told about any hazards that may affect health and safety, so they can take the appropriate action to minimise them. They need to tell you about any problems, too.

Times when you might work with your employer and co-workers (or when your elected employees' safety representative might, on your behalf) include doing risk assessments of your tasks and workplace, and developing safe work policies and procedures that affect you.

A risk assessment is a simple but thorough way of identifying the safety problems that exist in your workplace or in the tasks you do — and then controlling them. Your employer may use the four SAFE steps to do this:

- S** POT THE HAZARD
- A** SSESS THE RISK
- F** IX THE PROBLEM
- E** VALUATE RESULTS

Safe work policies and procedures ensure everyone is doing their job safely and is committed to improving health and safety in the workplace.

# HAZARDS TO YOUR HEALTH: HAND AND ARM INJURIES

Your hands are used in almost everything you do, at home, work and play. Think about what you might be doing right now: turning the pages of this guide, perhaps having a cup of tea or a meal break, before you go back to work.

Often, we take these vital tools for granted. It is perhaps only when something goes wrong and we cannot use our hands or arms that we realise just how much we need them.

For people working in a processing factory, some of the body parts most affected by injury are the hands, finger and thumbs. Wrist and shoulder injuries are also very common. At the front of this book are examples of real-life workplace accidents that have happened to people working in factories in Tasmania.

You might think that only a traumatic injury — one that causes an amputation of your hand or arm, for example — would affect your life. But the consequences of other seemingly ‘smaller’ accidents can have a big impact, too.

You might experience broken bones, and damaged nerves or tendons. You might require surgery, and then rehabilitation like physiotherapy. You might be left with long-term effects such as a loss of sensation in your fingers, hands or arms; or a greater risk of arthritis.

You could be out of work for a long time; this could affect your income, how you pay your rent or mortgage and other bills, including any healthcare costs. You might even need to think about changing jobs if you can’t physically do the same tasks.

# COMMON PROBLEMS — POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Even though your employer has the main responsibility for health and safety at your workplace, you need to be aware of the types of hazards you might experience.

Over the following pages are some common safety problems found in processing factories, and ways to fix them (this information may help in a risk assessment, as mentioned on page 10).



# SAFETY HAZARD

Walking on slippery floors (for example, after mopping or a product spill)

## **Possible result**

This could make you slip, trip or fall over

## **Possible solutions**

Use auto-scrubbers

Use barricades to separate people away from wet areas

Wear non-slip footwear



# SAFETY HAZARD

Using blunt knives and cutting tools

## **Possible result**

These can cause lacerations, sprains, and trauma to tendons, ligaments and muscles

## **Possible solutions**

Keep the blades in good condition and sharpened for the task

Regularly inspect the handles as well as the blades and make sure they are in good condition

Keep a record of these inspections and any necessary repairs



# SAFETY HAZARD

Being hit or trapped by falling objects (such as products or boxes)

## **Possible result**

This can cause crush injuries, lacerations, bruising, sprains and strains to the part of your body that is hit or trapped. You could ultimately suffer mutilation and amputation

## **Possible solutions**

Don't stack products or cartons too high

Don't overload benches, trolleys or pallets

Don't overload stack racks

— All these ideas should stop objects from falling onto you



# SAFETY HAZARD

Unguarded nip points (these are points in or around a conveyor belt that could catch or snag a body part)

## **Possible result**

These can cause crush injuries, lacerations, and amputation

## **Possible solutions**

Make sure all nip points are adequately guarded

Follow lock-out or tag-out procedures before you do any cleaning or maintenance work on the belt

Make sure safety cut-out switches are within easy reach

See also solutions for *Unguarded moving parts of a machine*



# SAFETY HAZARD

Being hit by machinery that moves, such as forklifts and other vehicles

## **Possible result**

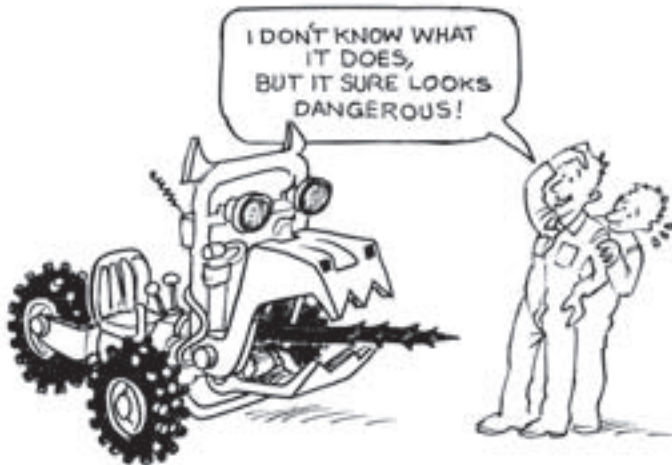
This could cause crush injuries, lacerations, bruising, sprains and strains to the part of your body that is hit. You could ultimately suffer mutilation and amputation, or even die

## **Possible solutions**

Make sure all moving machinery works in clearly defined areas

Make sure pedestrian traffic is kept clear from vehicle traffic

Operate machinery at a speed appropriate to the workplace  
(slow down)



# SAFETY HAZARD

Unguarded moving parts of a machine

## Possible result

You could become entangled in the unguarded moving components, which could cause you to lose your fingers, hands or arms. You could also suffer lacerations, bruising, sprains, strains and mutilations

## Possible solutions

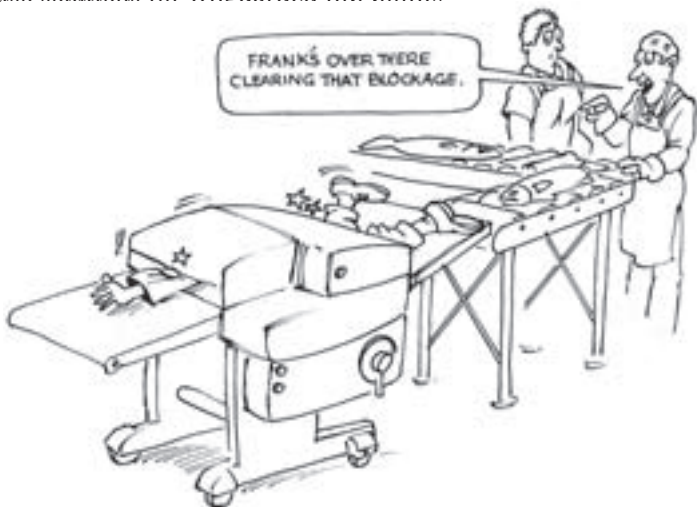
Make sure machinery is shut down correctly before you do any cleaning or maintenance work on the machinery

Make sure there are adequate guards in place

Don't wear loose clothing; if you have long hair, tie it back or tuck it under a cap

Use tools (not your hands) to clear blockages, or to fill or empty machinery with moving or cutting parts

See also solutions for Unguarded nip points



# WANT MORE INFORMATION?

## WORKPLACE STANDARDS TASMANIA

Workplace Standards Tasmania is a division of the Tasmanian Government Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.

Your first point of contact with Workplace Standards is the Helpline. Helpline inspectors provide information about matters handled by Workplace Standards, as well as providing free publications.

You can call the Helpline on 1300 366 322 between 9 am and 5 pm Monday to Friday (except on statewide public holidays). You can also email [wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au](mailto:wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au).

To report a workplace accident, you can contact the Helpline 24 hours a day.

## WORKPLACE STANDARDS LIBRARY

The Workplace Standards library houses a significant collection of workplace health and safety resources, including books, reports, journals, videos and all Workplace Standards publications.

You're welcome to visit the library, although the collection is open to the public for reference only. Photocopying is available, subject to copyright legislation. Videos are available for borrowing by registered borrowers and the video catalog is available on request.

The library is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 am until 4.30 pm. It is located at 30 Gordons Hill Road in Rosny Park.

If you are in the north or north-west, library resources can be sent to and viewed at either the Workplace Standards Launceston or Burnie offices. Call the Rosny Park Librarian on 6233 2915 for details.



## WORKPLACE ISSUES MAGAZINE

*Workplace Issues* is for anyone interested in what happens in the workplace. It looks at problems and solutions, innovations and ideas, and anything that might affect you at work.

*Workplace Issues* is published five times a year and is free of charge. To receive your copy, call the Workplace Standards Helpline on 1300 366 322.

## WORKPLACE SAFE WEBSITE

Go to [www.workplacesafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.workplacesafe.tas.gov.au) to download publications and find information about relevant legislation.

If you don't have access to the Internet at work, you can go online at a public library, Service Tasmania online access centre, a community centre or an internet café.

## PUBLICATIONS

Workplace Standards produces a number of publications aimed at improving workplace health and safety. Some you may be interested in include:

- *A Guide to First Aid in the Workplace* GB119
- *A Guide to the Election of ESRs* GB139
- *Body Strain Prevention for Workers* GB124
- *ESR Handbook* GB138
- *Eye Injuries* SBo37
- *Hazard Management: Play it SAFE* GB081
- *Play it SAFE with Chemicals: A Guide to Managing Hazardous Substances in the Workplace* GB084
- *Welcome to the Workplace: A Guide for New Workers* GB140B.

These and others are available from the Workplace Standards Helpline. Call 1300 366 322 or email [wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au](mailto:wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au). They are also available online at [www.workplacesafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.workplacesafe.tas.gov.au), or on our Publications CD, which you can get from the Helpline.

## OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For more information about health and safety at your workplace, talk to your:

- elected employees' safety representative
- fire warden
- first aider
- health and safety committee
- human resources officer
- occupational health and safety manager
- safety officer
- supervisor
- union representative.

Some other sources of information are:

- Unions Tasmania: 6234 9553 and [www.unionstas.com.au](http://www.unionstas.com.au)
- The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: 6236 3600 and [www.tcci.com.au](http://www.tcci.com.au)
- [www.wst.tas.gov.au](http://www.wst.tas.gov.au) and search for "links to other agencies" (be sure to use the "" marks in your search). This part of the Workplace Standards Tasmania website has links to other Tasmanian government departments and Australian health and safety agencies. Remember that any reference to other states' legislation may be inconsistent with Tasmania's legislation.





**1300 366 322** [www.workplacesafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.workplacesafe.tas.gov.au)

For more information contact  
Workplace Standards Tasmania  
Phone: 1300 366 322 (within Tasmania)  
(03) 6233 7657 (outside Tasmania)  
Fax: (03) 6233 8338  
Email: [wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au](mailto:wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au)

**HOBART** 30 Gordons Hill Road, PO Box 56, Rosny Park 7018  
**LAUNCESTON** Henty House, 1 Civic Square, Launceston 7250  
**BURNIE** Reece House, 46 Mount Street, PO Box 287, Burnie 7320