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Safety Matters

Safety Meeting Topic: Use the Guards



A military guard is a good simile for machine guarding. Like a person or K9's duty while on guard, they prevent intrusions into restricted or unsafe areas. This access prevention is what the most effective machine guard does; it prevents people from going over, under, around, or through it to the point where an injury will occur. This protection could be at the point-of-operation, at the power transmission, or other hazardous points. Guards help to prevent a pinch, crush, puncture, amputation, or fatality.

Here are eight points to consider and talk through with employees:

1. Two common guards are fixed in place and interlocking.
 - a. Fixed guards, like the name implies, are fixed in place. They are common guards seen in many workplaces.
 - b. Interlocking is similar to fixed, but supply added protection turning off the machine power if it is removed or opened.
2. Guards are there to help keep people from contacting moving parts.
3. Guards should be in place when operating the equipment.
4. Check the machinery before start-up to verify guarding is in place and in good condition.
5. Ensure there is a communication and work restriction procedure in place when guards are missing or damaged. Communicate missing and damaged guards to the supervisor/leader in charge before equipment start-up.
6. When removing guards during repairs or maintenance procedures, de-energize the equipment and logout/tagout energy sources. If this is not possible, then specific compliance procedures with 29 CFR 1910.147 must be created and followed.
7. Even though guards are in place, hazards may still exist. Avoid wearing loose clothing, neckties, jewelry, gloves, or other objects that can catch in machinery, which could lead to injuries or death.
8. Respect the machine power and injury sources. Follow necessary, safe work practices at all times.

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