



Machine Guarding

Safeguarding Reference Guide

Moving machine parts have the potential to cause severe workplace injuries including crushed fingers, amputations, burns, and blindness. Guards must prevent contact with hazardous parts from all directions. Removing or bypassing a guard is a serious violation and has already resulted in amputations at this facility.

KEY PRINCIPLES	
A.U.T.O.	Guards must prevent contact Around, Under, Through, and Over the machine. All four directions.
Never Remove	Removing a machine guard without authorization is a serious violation. Lockout must be applied first.
Report Missing Guards	If a guard is missing or damaged, tag the machine out of service and notify your supervisor immediately.
Real Incident	An employee removed a guard to check an infeed screw. A glove caught in the belt resulted in an amputation.

WHY MACHINE GUARDING MATTERS

Any machine part, function, or process that may cause injury must be safeguarded.

When the operation of a machine injures the operator or others, the hazards must be eliminated or controlled.

Guards prevent injuries including crushed fingers, amputations, burns, and blindness.

OSHA requires machine guarding on all machines with moving parts that could cause injury.

THE A.U.T.O. PRINCIPLE



Guards must prevent contact from all four directions:

A – Around: You must not be able to reach around any guard to contact a moving part.

U – Under: You must not be able to slide under a guard to contact a hazardous area.

T – Through: Openings in guards must be too small to insert fingers or hands.

O – Over: Guards must be tall enough that parts cannot be reached from above.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Never remove a machine guard for any reason without following the lockout/tagout procedure first.
- If a guard is missing or damaged, do not operate the machine. Tag it out and notify your supervisor.
- Do not modify guards or use machines with modified or improvised guarding.
- Report any situation where reaching a moving part is possible through, around, under, or over a guard.

INCIDENT CASE STUDY

REAL INCIDENT — THIS FACILITY

What happened: An employee removed a guard to verify that an infeed screw was operating correctly.

While checking the equipment without the guard in place, the employee's glove was caught by a belt.

Result: Amputation of the left fingertip.

What this means: Never remove a guard for any reason. Use lockout/tagout and machine-specific procedures for all maintenance.

A 7-gauge steel guard weighing 230 lbs was subsequently bolted to concrete as a corrective action.

If a guard is missing, the machine does not run. Tag it out and report it immediately.

MACHINE GUARD INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Complete before operating any machine.



- ☐ All machine guards are in place and undamaged
- ☐ No moving parts reachable around, under, through, or over any guard
- ☐ No guard has been removed, modified, or improvised
- ☐ Emergency stop is accessible and functional
- ☐ Lockout procedure completed before any servicing or guard removal
- ☐ Correct PPE for this machine is being worn
- ☐ Any missing or damaged guard tagged out and reported before operating
- ☐ Loose clothing, gloves, and jewelry appropriate for this machine type

This document is part of the Meat Institute Worker Safety Series, supporting Reporting Metric A4: Supervisors lead safety huddles and toolbox chats regularly with hourly workers.

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