Stay Alert to Stay Alive



Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Struck-by and caught-between hazards account for over 1,500 workplace deaths a year and are present in almost every industry sector.

While they can happen anywhere, the hazards are most common in:

- Work zones;
- Working with or around heavy equipment;
- During overhead and scaffold work; and
- Construction work, including excavation work and the construction of concrete walls.

What's the Danger?

When an injury is caused from the impact of being hit by something it is considered a struck-by incident. The following are real-life struck-by fatalities.

A worker on a road construction crew was setting traffic cones at a paving project. He was injured when he was struck by an oncoming car and thrown over the hood of the car and into another lane of traffic. He was then struck and dragged 140 feet by another vehicle. He died because of the injuries he sustained.

An 18-year-old sawmill employee was killed when he was struck in the head by the guard on a wood chipper machine. On the day of the incident, the victim didn't follow standard operating procedures and tried to remove the guard by himself and before the wheel stopped rotating. As he did so the guard came into contact with the spinning wheel, causing it to fly and strike him in the head.

When an injury happens from being pulled into or crushed between two or more objects it is considered a caught-between incident. Here's another true story of a worker killed; this time though he was crushed to death.

An employee was working in a trench 4 feet wide and 7 feet deep. About 30 feet away a backhoe was straddling the trench. The backhoe operator noticed a large chunk of dirt falling from the side wall behind the worker in the trench. He called out a warning but it was too late. Before the worker could climb out, the trench wall collapsed on him and buried him up to his neck. The crushing weight of the dirt suffocated him before the backhoe operator could dig him out.

How to Protect Yourself

To protect yourself from struck-by hazards:

- Ensure all hand tools are maintained in good condition.
- Only use powder-actuated tools if you are trained and authorized to do so.
- Never use compressed air for cleaning your clothes, equipment, or anything else.
- Don’t forget to secure all materials and tools if you’re working at heights and check that toe boards are installed along the edge of overhead walking and working surfaces and scaffolds.
- Use tag-lines to keep suspended loads controlled.
- Never walk under suspended loads. You could be struck or crushed by the load.
- Secure stacked materials to prevent sliding, falling or collapsing. Stacked materials are also struck-by and caught-between hazards.
- Finally, wear head, eye and face protection in areas where falling or flying objects are likely.

To protect yourself from caught in or between hazards:

- Use machinery that is properly guarded.
- Use methods such as blocking and cribbing, to ensure that machinery is supported, secured or otherwise made safe from unexpected moving, rolling, or shifting.
- Don’t wear loose clothing or jewelry around moving parts, tools and equipment.
- Never get into a trench or excavation that isn’t properly shored or protected.
- Follow lockout/tagout procedures so equipment cannot be started accidentally when you are doing adjustments or maintenance. Unexpected startup could result in both a struck-by or caught-between hazard.
- Always make eye contact with equipment operators before walking in front of, behind or around equipment and pay attention to back-up alarms on equipment and vehicles.

Final Word

Stay alert to struck-by and caught-between hazards to stay alive.