



Safety Alert August 2023

Subject/Topic: Prevention of finger injuries

Background: Over the last few months, the Safety team has seen a trend of finger injuries to staff and students. These range from sharps injuries to crush injuries and animal bites.



Incidents: Some of the examples of recent incidents include:

- Sharps injuries from handling needles and scalpels due to incorrect technique or inattention.
- Sharps injuries from contact with broken glass after equipment has been damaged or failed.
- Animal bites when an animal has behaved aggressively towards the handler and in some cases, incorrect technique or equipment was used.
- Crush injuries between two objects due to incorrect manual handling technique.

Immediate Actions Completed

- First aid was performed, and the wounds were dressed.
- Retraining in the correct technique was undertaken as required.
- Review of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for the task.
- Review of experimental protocol where equipment or technique was identified as a contributing factor.
- Review of Safe Work Procedures.

What should we do now?

- Ensure that all sharps, animal bite or crush risks have been identified in the Risk Management Form and controls implemented and documented in the Safe Work Procedure.
- Consider firstly whether you can eliminate the use of sharps.
- Where possible, use safety devices to prevent sharps injuries eg. disposable scalpel, all-in-one needle syringes.
- Train all staff and students in the safe handling and disposal of sharps as identified in your Safe Work Procedure.
- Where animals are used for experimental research, ensure that training is provided in the handling and restraint of animals.
- Be aware of hand placement when handling animals and consider protection for the non-dominant hand.
- Make sure that the PPE identified in your Safe Work Procedure is available and used by all people performing the task.
- Where practical for the task, the use of cut-resistant gloves should be considered.
- Inspection of glassware before each use, and disposal where cracks are identified.
- 2 Be Safe - take 2 minutes to plan and think about the work you are about to do and how you can prevent finger injuries.
- Do not bend needles or try to catch a falling sharp.
- Additional sharps training is also being investigated.

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