

DOS & DON'TS: Don't Let Workers Remove Machine Guards



Machine guards are one of the most important safety measures in many workplaces and, in fact, are required by OHS law. But installing machine guards isn't enough. You have to also ensure that workers don't remove these guards and discipline them if they do. For example, workers may remove guards they believe keep them from doing their jobs quickly. But when they do so, they expose themselves to injuries—and the company to liability.

Look what happened at an Ontario glass manufacturer's plant. A worker was unloading glass sheets from a mechanized conveyor when he stumbled and reached out to keep from falling. His hand contacted a mechanized roller and was pulled around it. As a result, he lost a finger and tendon. The MOL investigated the incident and found that the manufacturer had installed a guardrail in front of the conveyor. But workers had removed it to make their job easier. So at the time of the incident, there were no protective devices to prevent workers from accessing the rollers on that part of the conveyor. The glass manufacturer pleaded guilty to a guarding violation and was fined \$50,000 [*Southwest Glass Products Inc.*, Govt. News Release, March 22, 2012].

Insider Says: For more information on machine guarding requirements, see "[Machine Guarding: What the OHS Laws Require You to Do](#)." And on our sister site [SafetySmart.com](#), there's a [safety talk](#) explaining to workers how guards protect them.