

Safety Note #40

FENCE SAFETY



Data available from the Consumer Product Safety Commission indicate more than 110,000 people were treated in hospitals for fence-related injuries during 2003. Of this total, approximately 43% were lacerations to fingers, hands, arms, and legs, 16% were contusions to feet and legs, 13% were fractures to hands, fingers, and arms, and 12% were sprains to ankles and knees. Fence-related injuries were mostly sustained by people running or falling into fences, climbing or jumping over fences, and falling from fences.

Precautions for Working in the Vicinity of Fences

- Always be aware of fences that are located in the vicinity of the work area.
- Avoid fence contact injuries by maintaining a safe working distance from fences.
- Never take shortcuts by attempting to climb or jump over fences. Use gates to access or depart fenced areas.
- Always close gates after entering or leaving a fenced area.
- Do not sit on fences or gates.

Precautions for Installing or Maintaining Fences

- Always wear long pants and sturdy shoes (i.e., no sneakers or sandals) and use leather gloves and safety glasses when installing or maintaining fences.
- Prior to starting a fencing task, inspect the work area to identify potential hazards and obstructions such as insect or animal nests, stumps or rocks, and holes or gullies.
- When working outdoors on fencing projects, wear the appropriate clothing and sun protection for the weather conditions and consume adequate amounts of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Always maintain a safe distance when removing strapping from coiled fencing or wire.
- Use the appropriate tools for the fencing job such as high tensile wire cutters, crimping tools, pliers, and wire or fence stretchers.
- Never use vehicles (i.e., pickup trucks or ATVs) or farm machinery (i.e., tractors) to tighten wire or fence.
- Practice safe lifting methods to prevent back and shoulder injuries.
- Use extra caution when cutting wire or fence under tension.
- Always use a carpenter's apron to carry nails or fence staples.
- When tightening wire, stand on the far side of fence posts to maintain a protective barrier from potential wire breakage and whip lash.
- Take frequent breaks when performing strenuous tasks such as post hole digging, carrying heavy loads of wire or fencing, or tightening wire or fencing. Do not overtire yourself.