Operator fractures finger whilst using grinder.

WHAT HAPPENED

An employee was using a pedestal-mounted grinder fitted with a wire wheel to clean metal pins. During the task, the employee was holding a pin by hand when the rotating wire wheel caught the right-hand ring finger and pulled it into the machine. The machine subsequently stopped, and the employee also activated the emergency stop as a precaution. The finger became trapped between the wire wheel and the guard before the employee was able to release it. The incident was immediately reported to the works foreman, who is also a trained First Aider. Following an assessment, the employee attended hospital where an X-ray confirmed two fractures to the tip of the right-hand ring finger. Following treatment, the employee returned to work.

KEY FINDINGS

- The bench grinder was not adequately guarded against entanglement risks. Improved guarding has since been installed by the site team.
- The SSOW did not adequately address hand placement and line-of-fire risks associated with the task.
- A pre-shift risk assessment was completed; however, it was not task-specific and did not adequately identify the line-of-fire hazards.
- The scope of work changed to include the use of a bench grinder; however, the risk assessment was not reviewed to identify the additional line-of-fire hazards and required controls.
- Gloves were being worn at the time of the incident, in this case it is likely that they prevented a more serious laceration injury. However, it should be noted that wearing gloves can increase the potential risk of entanglement associated with rotating equipment. It is therefore, important to assess the suitability of gloves which can be determined through task specific risk assessment.

The images below show the damaged finger.





LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

SHARE — An employee fractured a finger while cleaning a metal pin by hand on a pedestal-mounted grinder fitted with a wire wheel. The rotating wheel drew the finger into the gap between the wheel and the guard.

DISCUSS — Where do we use wire wheels to clean small components? Can fingers, gloves or clothing reach the rotating wheel or be drawn into a gap around it? What happens when someone changes the equipment or method partway through a job?

ACT — Stop any task that requires holding small components by hand close to a rotating wire wheel. Check whether the task can be done using a safer cleaning method. If a wire wheel is still needed, have a competent person verify that the machine, wheel, guarding and any holding device are suitable for the task and keep hands clear of dangerous moving parts. Update the safe system of work and brief operators before restarting.

HSE advises keeping both gloved and bare hands away from unguarded moving machinery, please follow this link to download HSG17, the HSE's Guidance on the use of abrasive wheels.

Whilst the comments above relate to the use of wire wheels, they reflect the more general principles that can be applied when reviewing tasks.

- Apply the ERIC-P hierarchy and challenge the method of work to eliminate or reduce line-of-fire exposure through engineering controls such as guarding, fixtures, holding devices, or automation wherever reasonably practicable.
- Ensure Safe Systems of Work (SSOW), risk assessments, and task instructions clearly define each step of the activity, including critical controls such as safe hand positioning and exclusion from the line of fire.
- Where the scope of work changes, stop and review the risk assessment to identify any new hazards and confirm that appropriate controls are in place before continuing.
- Always consider line-of-fire hazards and take proactive steps to keep hands and other body parts clear of moving machinery, stored energy, and potential pinch points.

For Information - Reminder of key elements of ERIC P hierarchy of controls

• **E – Eliminate:** Completely remove the hazard or risk from the workplace.

• **R – Reduce (or Substitute):** Lower the risk, swap out a dangerous substance for a safer one, or reduce frequency/exposure.

• **I – Isolate:** Separate people from the hazard using physical barriers, guards, or distance.

• **C – Control:** Apply engineering, technical, or administrative controls

• **P – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Provide protective gear as a secondary line of defence.

• **D – Discipline:** Monitor, supervise and review to ensure the controls are actively used.

LOCATION:	**COMPANY-WIDE**	**ALERT STATUS:**	**Normal**
ACTIVITY:	**POWER TOOLS AND BATTERY SAFETY**	**DATE ISSUED:**	**19/11/2026 19:01:52**
SUB ACTIVITY:	**NO SUB ACTIVITY AVAILABLE**	**INCIDENT No:**	**04992**