A case can be made for hands being ranked as the most valuable and widely used tools in the workplace. Hands are relied on to perform some of the simplest and even the most difficult of tasks. They are used every day to get dressed, drive, type, text, and even play with kids and pets. The temporary and permanent inability to use one or both hands can make day-to-day activities more challenging. That’s why it is critical that this part of the body be protected from serious injury on the job. According to Saskatchewan Workers’ Compensation Board claims made in 2017, hand injuries accounted for nearly 30 per cent of all injuries in the construction industry.

“Even though our hands are extremely valuable tools, we still see workers that think cuts are just part of the job or complain that they can’t do their job properly when they have safety gloves on,” said Sebastian Marktanner, certified National Construction Safety Officer and Senior Safety Advisor with the SCSA.

“When hand protection is properly selected and used, it should not hinder how you perform a task, and if it does cause an inconvenience, this is minor compared to loss of fingers or permanent nerve damage,” added Marktanner. Selecting the proper glove is essential in protecting these tools from on-the-job hazards. The wrong gloves risk injury to the worker and a loss of productivity. It is important to remember that no single glove will provide protection against every hazard or substance.

During the glove-selection process it is important to identify key elements that are required to perform the job safely:

- Are abrasions and punctures from sharp objects a problem? Many gloves are designed to protect from slashes caused by sharp objects, but few provide high levels of puncture resistance from objects such as the ragged edges of a piece of metal or glass. Will the abrasions or punctures occur to the palm, top of the hand, or both?
- Is a secure grip vital to the application? When workers cannot grasp objects securely, especially those that are wet or oily, the objects may slide through their hands and result in injuries or damaged products;
- Is dexterity important? Working at high speeds require having the dexterity and tactile sensitivity to handle small parts or objects quickly;
- Is protection or dexterity the priority?
Thinner-gauge gloves offer more dexterity; heavier-gauge gloves offer greater hand protection; • Are the gloves properly sized for individual workers? Gloves that are too large will slide around on the hands, won’t provide protection where it is needed, and could become caught in machinery or moving parts. Gloves that are too snug can decrease a worker’s dexterity and may become so uncomfortable that workers will remove them; • Will the gloves be required to offer protection from heat or cold temperatures? Insulated gloves should be selected to protect from extreme temperatures; • Will the worker be wearing the gloves for a few minutes at a time or all day? Comfort is important for longer wear. Several types of gloves are available, following are a few examples: • Electrical insulation gloves are designed to protect employees when working with exposed energized conductors; • Leather gloves are designed for welding or for other general purposes; • Cut-resistant gloves, depending on the level of hazard and the type of work environment, include stainless steel mesh, kevlar fabric, and other materials for lighter weight cut resistance; and • Chemical resistant gloves are made from many different materials and include different cuffs, lengths and thicknesses. Heat/cold resistant gloves carry many general purposes and will provide heat/cold protection. Through in-person tool box talks, safety meetings and hand safety demonstrations SCSA Advisors distributed hundreds of cut resistant, co-branded gloves. Other campaign elements – which included a broadcast marketing campaign; a concentrated social media campaign which included regular Twitter and Facebook posts; and some print marketing - expanded the audience reach and engagement to the thousands. The All Hands In hand health and safety awareness initiative targeted business owners; health and safety practitioners; and employees or workers through injury prevention messaging efforts.