

OSHA Regulations for Supervision of Working in the Plastics Industry

The plastics industry is a significant player in U.S. industry. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration provides safety standards for plastics facilities that aim to prevent injury and fatalities in the workplace. This is in recognition of the potential hazards and risks from the associated equipment and emissions. Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, it is the responsibility of an employer to provide a safe and healthful workplace free of serious recognized hazards, and to comply with all applicable OSHA standards.

OSHA Safety Regulations

Molding machinery is the foundation of the plastics industry, and together with the auxiliary equipment, these machines can present potential hazards to safety. If care is not taken, minor and serious injuries can occur, including skin burns, electric shock, loss of extremities, bruises, cuts and even death. Relevant OSHA safety standards and federal regulations address plastics molding machinery operators that are routinely responsible for the manual feed of the resin, plastic retrieval, the lockout/tagout maintenance, and the system control panel.

Personal Protective Equipment

OSHA standard regulations require that employees be provided and use personal protective equipment. Especially for the plastics industry, specific safety and protective garments should be worn in order to operate or service machinery. These include eye and face protection, head protection, body protection, hand and arm protection, and foot and leg protection. In addition, you should provide respirators and hearing protection to your employees. It is mandatory to have proper ventilation and prevent atmospheric contamination in the workplace.

Communication

You must make sure that chemical safety is observed in the workplace. Per OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, you should develop and disseminate information regarding the hazardous nature of the various chemicals. Although chemical manufacturers prepare labels and safety data sheets that are conveyed to their downstream customers, make sure they are intact and that your workers are trained to handle the chemicals appropriately. Have comprehensive hazard communication programs that include employee training manuals, safety data binders, warning forms, and labeling of containers.

Machine Guard Requirements

OSHA recognizes that operation and maintenance of molding machines and related equipment can unexpectedly engage, causing injury to the operator. Plastics processing machines require guards to protect workers from exposure to high voltage, high temperature, nip points and numerous moving parts. Inadequate machine guarding -- improperly installed, removed or bypassed -- can cause serious injuries including fatalities and amputations. OSHA requires that guards be in place, including moveable and fixed front and rear guards.