

# PIKE POLE SAFETY

Pike poles are commonly used in wood products manufacturing to clear jams and keep material flowing. They are simple looking tools but they are often used in complex situations and when used improperly, they can cause injuries to the head, hands, fingers and chest.

Here are a couple of questions to ask yourself when considering the use of a pike pole for a task:

- IS IT THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB?
- CAN YOU USE IT SAFELY?



**BC Forest Safety**

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## IS IT THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB?

- A pike pole is not a pry bar – it is used mainly for pulling and has limited use for pushing.
- Would it be more expedient to simply stop and lockout to correct the problem and avoid using the pike pole?
- **Is it the proper length?** A pike pole that is too long may strike objects behind you. A pike pole that is too short may cause you to over-reach and put you at greater risk of sprain/strain injuries.
- **Is it sharp?** A dull pike pole will be more likely to fail during use, increasing the risk of injury.
- **Is it damaged from previous use?** Do not use damaged equipment. Find an undamaged pike pole and have the other one tagged “*out of service*” and remove it from the area.

## SAFETY TIPS FOR THE USE OF A PIKE POLE:

- Although you may not be required to lockout, turn off the transfer chain or conveyor to avoid catching the pike pole in moving equipment or materials.
- The blunt end must be equipped with a knob on it and should be long enough to fit under your armpit or over your shoulder. That way, if the sharp end comes out of the object you are moving, you won't get struck by the blunt end in the face or chest.
- Never hold the pike pole by the blunt end as that increases the risk of crushing your hand or fingers between the blunt end and a guardrail, wall or other object. If you have to hold a pike pole by the blunt end to reach an object, then the pike pole you are using is too short.
- Avoid using on jammed wood. If your fingers or hands are against the guardrail you may cause significant injury to your hand or fingers.
- When using a pike pole, ensure your feet are flat on the floor and you have good balance.
- Use both hands to ensure proper positioning and control.
- Once the pike pole is secure in the object, pull in a smooth, controlled manner with increasing intensity.
- After a few pulls, if the object does not move, reposition the head to prevent the point from slipping out.
- Anticipate what may happen to the pike pole and/or material if the pike pole suddenly dislodges .
- When your task is complete, always store the pike pole in a suitable holder. Do not lean it up against a wall or handrail as it may fall over and create a tripping hazard. If a convenient holder is not readily available, work with your supervisor and maintenance team to have one installed.

**After a few attempts, if you can't unjam the wood with a pike pole and find yourself endlessly wrestling the blockage, move on and lock out the equipment instead.**

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