

GUARD REMOVAL “JUST THIS ONCE”

A machine safeguard is not an inconvenience. It is a barrier between a normal workday and a life-changing injury. In manufacturing, most of us have seen equipment jam or misfeed and felt tempted to clear a problem that *"will only take a second."*

That is exactly when *"just this once"* becomes dangerous. Machines are unpredictable and can start, shift or cycle without warning, turning what may seem like a quick task into a serious injury.

NO GUARD COMES OFF WHILE A MACHINE CAN MOVE:

- WHY “JUST THIS ONCE” IS SO DANGEROUS
- FOLLOW THE RULE: NEVER REMOVE A GUARD WHILE A MACHINE IS ENERGIZED
- WHAT TO DO WHEN PRODUCTION PRESSURE SHOWS UP



BC Forest Safety
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WHY “JUST THIS ONCE” IS SO DANGEROUS

Most serious machine injuries don't happen because someone intentionally takes a risk. They often begin with a small problem: a jammed conveyor, a guard in the way, a quick adjustment or pressure to get running again.

- Removing or bypassing a guard for a quick clear puts hands, fingers, clothing and tools placed dangerously close to moving parts.
- Common hazards include pinch points, cutting points, rollers, belts and unexpected startup.
- Amputations, crushing injuries and other serious can happen in a matter of seconds, often before a person has time to react.

FOLLOW THE RULE: NEVER REMOVE A GUARD WHILE A MACHINE IS ENERGIZED

- If a guard needs to be removed, opened, adjusted or bypassed, the machine must first be de-energized and locked out.
- Stop the equipment before anyone reaches in or works near the hazard.
- Control hazardous energy and follow the lockout procedure.
- Verify that the machine is fully de-energized and cannot accidentally start up or move.
- Remember, a stopped machine is not always a safe machine.
- Stored energy, automatic cycles, gravity, air pressure, hydraulics or someone else restarting equipment can all cause machinery to move without warning.

WHAT TO DO WHEN PRODUCTION PRESSURE SHOWS UP

- **Pause:** Stop the job before reaching past a guard or removing one.
- **Call it out:** Tell a lead hand, supervisor, maintenance team or safety representative if a guard creates a clearing or access problem.
- **Use the right process:** Follow lockout and machine-specific instructions before clearing jams, cleaning, adjusting equipment or troubleshooting.
- **Do not normalize shortcuts:** If we allow “just this once,” unsafe behaviours can quickly become the norm and give the next person a reason to do the same thing.
- **Protect each other:** If you see someone about to remove or bypass a guard, speak up immediately. Stopping a job is better than explaining an injury.



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