Safety Double Play

We all know the old saying that two heads are better than one - meaning that two people working together on a problem are likely to come up with the best solution. Sometimes two sets of gloves, when combined together, offer workers the best solution for protection.

Jack Addams, environmental health and safety coordinator for a manufacturer of automobile glass, notes that workers at his facility have been double gloving (wearing one pair of gloves over another) for many years.

"Our workers are handling raw glass that is wet," he explains. "They wear nitrile disposable gloves for an added layer of cut protection and to keep their hands dry. They wear Kevlar gloves to protect their hands from cuts." In the manual break out areas, a cutter cuts out the shapes of the automobile glass, and then the piece goes to an employee to break off the trim. The employee picks up the glass, puts it where it should be, breaks off the trim and then sends it to the line. "We've always used this combination. It works very well," adds Addams.

Double gloving aids many operations

At a global manufacturer of sporting goods, there are a number of different situations where double gloving is used. According to Joe Mack, senior production manager, the printing area is the first. "This is the area where workers print materials for ski tops. They wear a knit liner with a nitrile glove. The liner is lightweight and absorbs perspiration, while the nitrile offers protection from chemicals."

In the molding area workers wear a heavier cotton liner with a rubber glove. "They are working with resins here," Mack says. "The tools are very hot. Double gloving keeps the resins away from their hands and it also protects them from the edges of the skis when they remove them from the moldings."

The third operation requires triple gloving. In the wet sanding process, workers grind structure into base. They wear three pairs here - leather gloves over rubber over a liner. "The liner absorbs sweat and provides comfort, the rubber protects them from the grinding fluid, and the leather gloves protect them from steel edges and flash. We're very concerned about safety and durability in the sanding room, and this is the combination that works best for our employees. We've tried different things, but we always go back to the triple gloving for durability. The way our workers handle the skis, running their hands up and down the ski, they need full protection."

A fabricator of glass for buildings, workers 30" X 20"sheets of raw and tempered glass. Jamie Bonnie, plant manager, notes, "Our workers wear Kevlar gloves under a rubber ball glove," he says. "Rubber stops the cut in a general handling situation. But if glass stabs the hand there's nothing to stop it. So we add the Kevlar glove to prevent injuries of this nature."

Protection from the heat

A manufacturer of automotive wheels, workers handle extremely hot wheels. "In one operation," explains Eli Smith, health and safety coordinator, "workers take the wheels off a tray, inspect them and put them on a conveyor belt about three feet away from them. They hold the wheels for about ten seconds. It doesn't seem like a very long time, but the wheels are very hot." Smith says that he kept trying stronger and stronger weights of hot mill gloves to try to make the workers more comfortable. "Nothing seemed to work," he says. "Some workers tried using an additional hot mill glove as a pad to hold the wheels with. But that didn't always work either." So through a series of trials and errors, Smith and his Magid rep found a double-glove combination that is working well. "Our workers wear a knit glove under their hot mill gloves," he says. "It gives them a better grip and provides the added protection from the heat they need."
In another area of his facility, Smith had a slightly different problem. In this operation, workers look at the wheels on a fluorscope - like an X-Ray machine - to see if there are any inclusions. "Workers here have to hold onto the hot wheel longer - up to 30 seconds," he explains. "But, unlike the other operation, slippage wasn't an issue since the wheels were secure. We tried adding the knit glove under the hot mill glove here, but it didn't provide enough protection." So Smith decided to have workers use Kevlar hand pads in conjunction with their hot mill gloves for this operation. "In fact they use a two pad rotation system," he says. "One is cooling off while the other is being used. The system is working very well."

**Looking for new combinations**
Mack of the sporting goods corporation notes that he keeps looking at new ideas and different combinations. "Often it takes a lot of tries to find the right solution," he says. "Our Magid rep is always talking to our operators to learn more about what is and isn't working for them. We're concerned about dexterity. We're continuously looking for ways to improve dexterity without compromising safety, and cost is a factor, too." Mack notes that he makes changes whenever something newer and better comes along. "There's always something better coming along," he says. "For example, nine years ago we didn't have nitrile gloves. What an improvement they were for dexterity! I count on my Magid rep to keep us informed about these types of improvements."

**A practice that gets results**
Bonnie, of the glass manufacturer, notes that double gloving has been their practice for some time at their facility. "Our employees were getting a lot of nicks. And we had two cases requiring stitches," he explains. "So about five years ago we went to double gloving. Our number of recordable accidents went down about 90% in that first year alone. We almost eliminated cuts period. Now, if an employee gets a cut it's most likely a case of non-compliance."

Bonnie admits that the new policy had to be implemented slowly. "Our workers weren't very excited about wearing two pairs of gloves," he says. "We had to move very slowly in implementing the policy. Employees were concerned about multiple gloves being too cumbersome, or hot. In reality the results far outweigh those concerns and just about everyone in the plant wears two pairs of gloves these days."