Machine safety
Prevention of mechanical hazards

Fixed guards and safety distances
GUIDE RG-597
Fixed guards and safety distances
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Original title:
Sécurité des machines - Prévention des phénomènes dangereux d’origine mécanique, protecteurs fixes et distances de sécurité

Acknowledgements
We want to thank the INRS for allowing us to use brochure ED 807 entitled Sécurité des machines et des équipements de travail – Moyens de protection contre les risques mécaniques; it served as the scientific basis for this document.

We also want to thank Réal Bourbonnière, engineer, for his contribution to writing the section on general risk-management principles based on IRSST guide R-405 entitled Guide de conception des circuits de sécurité : introduction aux catégories de la norme ISO 13849-1:1999 (version corrigée).

© Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail (IRSST) et Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail du Québec (CSST)
Legal deposit – Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2009
ISBN 978-2-550 (French version)
Preface

This guide mainly discusses the prevention of mechanical hazards. It describes methods for eliminating hazards at source or for reducing them, as well as ways to protect against them by using fixed guards.

The risk reduction or distance protection principles presented in the guide are general and are appropriate for the majority of machines. For some machines (for example, conveyors, metal presses, drills, rubber machines, etc.), before applying the generic solutions proposed in this guide, one should consult Québec regulations, standards relating to these machines (ISO, CSA, ANSI, etc.), or the technical guides published by the CSST (such as the guide Sécurité des convoyeurs à courroie), or by other organizations (ASP, INRS, IRSST, etc.), which can provide details on how to ensure the safety of these machines.

This guide is not an exhaustive collection of solutions, but it covers some of the currently known protection principles. For more information on machine safety, refer to the bibliography at the end of the document, or consult the Web site: www.centredoc.csst.qc.ca.
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Introduction

When machine-related mechanical hazards (refer to the quick reference in Appendix A) cannot be eliminated through inherently safe design, they must then be reduced to an acceptable level, or the hazards that cause them must be isolated from the workers by guards that allow the minimum safety distances to be respected.

Most of the risks related to mechanical hazards can be reduced to acceptable forces or energy levels (see Table 4 in point 4.2) by applying a risk reduction strategy (see Figure 1). If this is impossible, the hazards must be isolated from people by guards that maintain a safety distance between the danger zone and the people, with the main result being to reduce access to the danger zone.

The main factors to be taken into consideration so that guards are effective are:

- the accessibility to the danger zone by the different parts of the human body;
- the anthropometric dimensions of the different parts of the human body;
- the dimensions of the danger zones as well as their position in space and in relation to the ground or the working platform.

1. In this guide, references are in brackets [ ] and the list of references is at the end of the document.