HeathBrook®

SMART GUIDE:
HAND PROTECTION SAFETY STANDARDS



NOVEMBER 2026

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Protective gloves can help reduce injury where risks remain after other controls. Select them through a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, considering the hazard, task, wearer, environment and duration of use. No glove protects against every hazard, and gloves must not introduce a new risk.

PROTECTION	SAFETY STANDARD	CONSIDERATIONS
Mechanical risks	BS EN 388:2016 +A1:2018	Control sharp edges, rough surfaces and pinch points wherever possible. Where residual risk remains, select gloves with the BS EN 388 performance levels needed for abrasion, blade cut, tear, puncture and—where claimed—impact. Higher numbers are not automatically better for every task; balance protection with grip and dexterity.
Chemical and wet-work risks	BS EN ISO 374-1:2016 +A1:2018	Use substitution, containment and tools before relying on gloves. Match the glove material to the named chemical, concentration, temperature and contact time. Check the manufacturer's permeation, degradation and breakthrough data, and plan safe removal and replacement. Additional guidance: BS EN ISO 374-1:2016+A1:2018 and the COSHH assessment. For prolonged or frequent contact with water, select suitable waterproof gloves.
Heat and fire	BS EN 407:2020	Control hot surfaces, flame and splash at source. Where residual risk remains, select the specific BS EN 407 performance levels required for burning behaviour, contact heat, convective heat, radiant heat and small/large molten-metal splash. Follow the product's use limits.
Cold	BS EN 511:2006	Provide shelter, warm-up arrangements and task controls as well as suitable hand protection. Where cold-protective gloves are required, select the BS EN 511 performance needed for convective cold, contact cold and water penetration, while maintaining safe grip and dexterity.
Electrical work	BS EN 60903:2003	Plan electrical work with the equipment isolated and proved dead wherever possible. Where live work is justified, competent persons must use suitable precautions, including correctly rated insulating gloves where required. Use gloves of the correct class under BS EN 60903:2003, with the required inspection, test, storage and leather over-glove arrangements specified by the employer and manufacturer.
Vibrations	BS EN ISO 10819:2013 +A2:2022	Reduce hand-arm vibration through tool selection, maintenance and exposure control. Gloves can help keep hands warm. HSE advises against relying on them for protection from vibration.
Micro-organisms	BS EN ISO 374-5:2016	Where the assessment identifies protection against bacteria, fungi or viruses, select gloves with the applicable BS EN ISO 374-5:2016 marking and verify any claimed virus performance. The chemical and biological protection required may need more than one standard.

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HOW TO READ A BS EN 388 MARKING

Read the characters beneath the mechanical risks pictogram from left to right. Each gives the result for a different test.



What the letters mean in this example

X The circular blade test was not performed or was unsuitable for the material.
C The straight blade cut result is level C: a cutting force of at least 10 N and below 15 N.
P The glove passed the optional impact test. If P is absent, the marking makes no impact protection claim.

The numbers and letters beneath the BS EN 388 symbol show how a glove performed in separate tests. Read them from left to right using the diagram: each position relates to a different type of resistance, such as abrasion, cutting or puncture. Higher numbers or letters indicate better performance within that particular test, but the code is not an overall safety score. The right combination depends on the task, alongside grip and freedom of movement. An X means a test was not carried out or was not applicable; 0 means the glove did not reach the minimum performance level for that test. Use ACT P as an easy way to remember the first four positions of an EN 388 marking: abrasion, circular blade cut, tear and puncture.

An optional impact test was also added, with P indicating a pass. If P is absent, no impact protection is claimed.



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We work closely with Traffi, a specialist safety glove manufacturer focused on reducing hand injuries in the workplace.

They originated the TraffiSystem®, a simple colour-coded approach to glove selection. It provides a clear and structured way to identify the cut-resistance level specified for each task, helping improve both safety awareness and compliance across the workforce.

Traffi partner with us to offer our customers comprehensive hand protection audits.

The marking shown reflects changes introduced in 2016, followed by a 2018 amendment, under the reference BS EN 388:2016+A1:2018. The 2016 revision added a straight-blade cut test, **graded A to F**, to help assess materials that can blunt the circular blade used in the original test.

This explains why a glove may show X in the second position and a letter in the fifth: the letter gives its straight-blade cut result. The two cut-test scales cannot be directly converted.

