

Safety Bulletin



Significant thorn strike injury to hand

It has recently been reported that a vegetation management team member has sustained a significant thorn strike injury to the middle finger of his right hand. The thorn strike caused pain and swelling that was so severe that he needed to attend hospital for assessment. Upon investigation the hospital had to undertake a full hand washout surgical procedure that evening in order to clear the infection. The operative had suffered a severe reaction, and has now subsequently been unable to attend work for in excess of three weeks. An image of his right hand following the surgery is below. The investigation into the incident discovered that while an approved glove was available to the operative on site, they were not being worn when the injury was sustained.



Issues to consider and learning points are:

1. Have the risks associated with thorn strikes on the work site been fully considered?
2. Can the work be planned differently to avoid potential contact?
3. Is work being carried out in accordance with your training, the work plan, and the use of suitable PPE?
4. Always ensure the hazards of a particular work site have been fully considered, and suitable control measures have been put in place.
5. Ensure that all accidents and incidents, including thorn strikes, are reported immediately.
6. Remember that PPE is the last line of defence, and other controls must be considered first.

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