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COMASEC

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New glove grip icons simplify selection

For many people, glove grip is one of the key performance features required when looking for the right glove for the job. Whilst gloves may provide the right level of physical protection, gloves without the right type of grip for the environment or the materials being handled can increase the risks of an accident taking place.

But what exactly is glove grip performance and how can health and safety managers really tell the grip performance that the gloves they are using or thinking of using can give them?

Health and safety managers need to understand that some glove materials that offer excellent grip performance in dry conditions, can offer very poor grip performance in wet or oily conditions.

Excellent glove grip may be an overused phrase in Hand & Arm Protection (HAP) catalogues but it really doesn't say if the glove is particularly suited for the environment in which it will be used – effectively it is too general a term to give health and safety managers the knowledge they need to understand that the glove they are looking for is right for them.

To help address the balance, and provide those with responsibility for workplace health and safety with the information that will help them make a more informed choice, hand protection expert Marigold Industrial®, has developed a Glove Grip Performance Guide, which has led to the creation of 4 Grip Icons.

Traditionally, when health and safety managers and those with health and safety responsibility, have come to the hand protection selection process, the driving force behind their selection has focused on the levels of protection the wearer requires – whether chemical, physical, mechanical or thermal – to protect them against the workplace hazards they face.

Other elements within the selection process have included the suitability of the glove for the task, is a longer cuff required and the environment (wet/dry/oily) in which the glove will be used.

To aid the selection process, glove performance measurements have been focused on recognised European Standards such as:

EN420 - General requirements for protective gloves
EN388 - providing Mechanical Protection data for abrasion, blade cut, tear and puncture resistance
EN374 - providing Chemical protection performance levels
EN407 - providing Heat Protection performance levels
EN511 - providing Cold Protection performance levels

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Whilst these test clarifications provide end users with specific performance data, when it comes to measuring the other essential element in the gloves selection process - grip performance - there have been no such equivalent tests and data available – until now.

Anyone wanting to measure glove grip performance, have had to rely on manufacturers claims that their gloves provide high grip performance in addition to wearer feedback, often best achieved through user trials.

As working conditions are often fixed, the only factor that can be modified to provide a better grip for the wearer is the glove, and each glove has a different grip power.

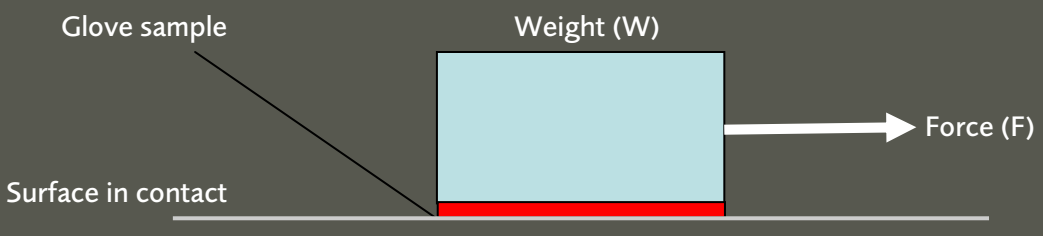
To help provide health and safety managers with more accurate information on which to base a glove selection decision, Marigold Industrial® has developed a test method to provide grip data on gloves across its range.

The glove grip performance data is based on the results of a series of in-situ tests that have been specially developed in Marigold Industrial's R&D facility in Malaysia.

So How do You Define and Measure Grip?

According to Marigold Industrial®, every raw material can be defined by a friction coefficient (COF), which it will have when it is applied to a specific environment. A classic example of this is the way that a tyre performs on a wet road compared to the way the same tyre will perform on a dry road.

When applied to a glove, the friction coefficient can be measured when a weight is applied to a glove material and a force is applied.



COF can be measured as a constant value when placed in a precise environment, with weight and force supplied in Newton Units.

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Making Grip part of the Selection Process

Whilst providing end users with the grip and comfort performance for gloves is undoubtedly a valuable thing, it is vital to remember that grip and comfort are two of three essential ratings that should become part of the selection process and under no circumstances should any one element be taken in isolation of the others.

EN performance data remains the agreed standard for HAP and always will. What the new grip performance data enables health and safety managers to do is fine tune their HAP selection to ensure that not only are the gloves they select providing the right levels of safety, but also give the optimal grip.

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