Preventing injuries from gang-box lids

What is the problem?
The hinged top lid of large purpose-built storage containers – commonly known as ‘gang-boxes’ – can slam shut with considerable force. These boxes are widely used by contractors in the construction industry to store tools and construction materials close to their work areas. They can be made from timber, form-ply, metal sheeting, steel or mesh, and are frequently fitted with wheels to allow for easy relocation. The top lid is usually fitted with a restraining chain to prevent the lid from opening too far and damaging the hinge.

What are the risks?
There is the potential for people to suffer serious crush or shear injuries, particularly to their hands and fingers, if caught between the closing edges when a gang-box lid slams shut. This may occur if:
- the gang-box is too close to structures, preventing the lid from fully opening
- the gang-box moves, due to the worker leaning into the box to retrieve tools or materials
- wind pressure pushes an opened gang-box lid
- materials stacked behind the gang-box prevent the lid from fully opening
- the natural balance of the gang-box lid is altered by, for example, using it as a work bench
- the lid restraining chain gets tangled or caught
- combinations of the above exist.

What is a solution to this problem?

Equipment
The lid should be fitted with a positive-acting automatic restraint, which engages when the lid is in the opened position. See below for an example.

Systems of Work
Gang-boxes with a hinged lid should only be accessed when the lid is in the fully open position and the restraining mechanism has engaged. Once engaged, a deliberate action is then required by a person to release the restraining mechanism to allow the lid to be lowered.

Further Information

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WorkSafe Victoria is a trading name of the Victorian WorkCover Authority.