

# Doctors reattach Gilbert man's hand

By Astrid Galvan

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A Gilbert man whose hand was reattached after he accidentally sawed it off recounted the day he thought he'd lost his hand for good.

Timothy Blazer, 52, sawed off his hand while working on cabinets at his house on Nov. 12. His doctors were stunned to learn Blazer, who was home alone at the time of the accident, calmly put his severed hand in ice and applied pressure to stop bleeding while waiting for emergency units to respond.

"He was very in control," said Dr. Lloyd Champagne, one of the surgeons at Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn hospital who reattached Blazer's hand.

Blazer, a safety director for Macy's, was cutting a cabinet on a cooler when it tipped, taking the saw with it. His hand was severed.

He was about to get in his car to drive himself to the hospital when he acknowledged the severity of his injury and called for help instead.

Five surgeries later, including four hours of surgery to reattach it, Blazer has movement in his hand. He can maneuver it as if squeezing an orange.

"When I woke up in the operating room I didn't expect to ever move my hand again," Blazer said.

Although doctors at the hospital have reattached hands before — Champagne said it happens about once

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a year — one of the main reasons the reattachment was successful was that Blazer acted quickly by putting his hand in ice.

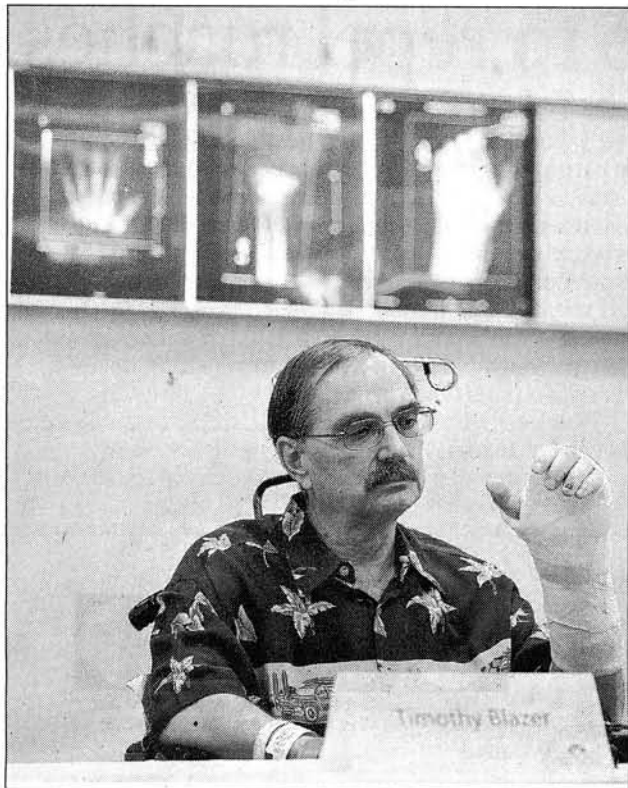
When asked how he remained so calm, Blazer said his background in the Boy Scouts and safety training for his job were factors.

In retrospect, he said, it was "stupid" to use a cooler instead of something sturdier. Blazer usually uses the tailgate of his pickup truck when sawing, but his wife had taken the truck.

He described the pain when the saw cut off his hand as an unexplainable sensation. "It was more of everything getting really hot," he said.

The most traumatic part might be over, but Blazer faces years of therapy to regain strength in his hand.

Champagne said Blazer will have therapy four times a week, although doctors are not sure that he'll ever regain all of his hand use.



MICHAEL SCHENNUM/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Doctors say Timothy Blazer, shown at a news conference Thursday at Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn hospital, helped save his severed hand by quickly placing it in ice.