



KNIFE SAFETY

SAFETY TIPS TO AVOID THE MOST COMMON INJURIES



This talk discusses the most common causes of injury when using knives at work and several tips for avoiding injuries.

Materials to have on hand:

- Knives used at the facility
- Examples of material to be cut

Items for attendees to consider during talk:

- What situations while working with a knife could cause you to cut yourself?
- What is a good daily practice to make sure the knives you use are in top condition for safe use?

TALK

Knives are one of those handy tools that everybody uses from time to time. People in all kinds of jobs use them, but they are also injured by knives—the high school student working in the supermarket produce department, the store worker who attempts to cut open a box, the butcher, even the restaurant salad chef. It's easy to take this common tool for granted. Even small knives can cause damaging and sometimes crippling cuts.

There are a few common causes of injury that, when safe practices are followed, could almost eliminate most injuries from knives:

- The most common hazardous condition in using a knife at work is your hand can slip from the handle onto the blade. That often happens when the handle—or hand—is wet or greasy.
- Another common injury is the knife striking the free hand or the body. That can be caused by a dull knife that forces you to put too much pressure on the object you're trying to cut, and the blade could slip and slice you or someone nearby. Another cause of this type of injury is when you are in a hurry or aren't focused 100 percent on the cutting task.

To avoid the often painful and sometimes crippling injuries when you use a knife at work—or at home—remember these important safety tips:

Select the right knife for the job. No single knife is suitable for every job. For example, too large a blade is awkward to handle, and too small a blade makes the job more difficult than it should be. Retractable blades are safer if you need to carry the knife around with you. Serrated edges are better for some purposes like cutting cardboard, boxes, or rope where a clean, straight cut isn't critical but it gets the job done quickly. Straight blades are preferred for most straight, clean-cutting situations. Be sure to choose the blade that's best for the job, not just the one that's the handiest.

Use your knife safely and keep it in good working condition. Even with such a simple tool, proper handling is essential. Be sure to follow these basic safe practices whenever you use a knife:

Continued on page 2

Talk Date: _____

Location: _____

Supervisor/ _____

Presenter: _____

Attendees: _____

Comments: _____

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- The cutting stroke should be away from the body whenever possible.
- Practice using the knife blade on a spare piece of material. That way, you'll make a better cut without making a mistake, and make sure that you're using the right blade for the task at hand.
- Be certain that you have enough room to move your arm freely as you cut.
- Keep handles dry and free of grease or oil—this practice will help keep your hands from slipping onto the blade.
- Never use a defective knife—for instance, one that has a broken handle or blade.

Check the blade often to make sure it has a sharp cutting edge. Change the blade in a utility knife as often as necessary to make sure it's sharp.

Store knives properly. Never leave an open knife blade lying loose on a work surface when you've finished with it. A toolbox or desk drawer is the best place for this type of knife. And be sure to retract the blade or keep a fixed blade in a sheath. It's easy to make a simple sheath out of heavy corrugated cardboard, which may spare someone a serious injury.

Get first aid whenever you are cut by a knife. Even the smallest cut should be cleaned and treated to help avoid infection. Injury records are full of cases in which someone neglected a small injury and blood poisoning developed, causing several weeks of lost time from the job.

Don't sacrifice safety. Respect your knife, use it safely, and make sure it's always in top shape.

