A Slice of Safety Can Help Prevent Knife Injuries



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Many workers use utility knives to open packaging. But one wrong move and these tools can do serious harm. In fact, nearly 40 percent of all injuries attributed to manual workshop tools in the US involve utility knives. And it's not only utility knives that pose a risk. The straight hand knife is also a commonly used tool in many industries and the cause of many severe accidents.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

If you make a mistake with a knife, there's a good chance it will cut something it shouldn't.

EXAMPLE

A worker used a knife to pick up a ham prior to boning. The knife slipped out of the ham striking him in the eye and blinding him. Another worker was permanently disfigured when his knife slipped out of a piece of meat he was carving and struck his nose, upper lip and chin.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Follow these safety tips when using a knife:

- Use the correct knife for the job.
- Never use a knife blade as a screwdriver or for any purpose other than cutting.
- Keep knives or blades sharp and in good condition.
- Remove damaged knives from service and dispose of dull or broken utility knife blades in a puncture-resistant container.
- If using a utility knife, ensure the blades are properly positioned in the handle before use.
- Wear steel mesh or Kevlar gloves to protect your hands from cuts and make sure the gloves fit properly.
- Wear safety glasses to protect your eyes in case a blade breaks.
- Always direct the knife away from the body, and keep extremities out of the cutting path.
- Don't apply too much pressure on the tool. If you're cutting through thick material, don't try to do it in one forceful movement. Make several passes along

the cutting line, slicing a little more deeply each time.
- Always pull the blade. Never push it. You could snap the blade off and injure yourself or someone else nearby.
- If you’re working with a knife for a long time, reduce the stress to your tendons and muscles by putting the knife down periodically and stretching, shaking and flexing your fingers.
- Never try to catch a falling knife in midair. Chances are you will cut yourself by grabbing the blade.
- When walking with a utility knife, always retract the blade. If that’s not possible, carry the knife with its cutting edge pointed down, not outward.
- If another person needs to borrow your knife, do not hand it to him/her. Place it on a level surface and let the other person pick it up.
- Never place a sharp knife in a position where it cannot be seen, such as in a sink full of sudsy water or in a tool box where someone may reach in without looking.
- If you do receive a cut from a knife or blade, get the wound treated immediately so that it does not become infected.

FINAL WORD

Knives are extremely handy on the job, but they can cut to you to the bone in an instant. So treat them with respect.