Preventing Cuts from Knives – Restaurant Safety Fatality File



Employee Lacerates Hand with Butcher Knife

An employee working as a cook in Los Angeles, CA was in a restaurant kitchen cutting a large piece of partially frozen beef with a 17-inch butcher knife. He worked at Tacos El Unico, which was a retail food facility that prepared and sold Mexican food to the general public using mixing, cooking and meat slicing and cutting operations. The cook was cutting the meat into smaller pieces so that it later could be sliced with a meat slicer. The employee was not wearing cut-resistant gloves. Using his right hand, which was wet with blood, the cook pushed the knife vertically into the meat with a stabbing motion. As he did so, his hand slipped off the knife handle and onto the blade lacerating his hand between the thumb and index finger. The cook stated that he had asked management for gloves ever since he started working at Tacos El Unico 3.5 years ago. The gloves were never provided. He also stated that although the employer requires the use of gloves, employees are not disciplined for not wearing them. The causative factor of the accident was the lack of cut-resistant gloves for some of the employees whose work involves excessive exposure to cuts. The store manager stated that these gloves would be provided to all employees cutting meat to prevent this type of accident from occurring in the future.