



Knife Safety

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Division -- Seattle

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Comments:

As insulators, firestoppers, and carpenters, cutting tools are part of our daily work: utility knives, fixed blades, snips, and more. If it has an edge, chances are we've used it to cut something. When used correctly, these tools are essential. But when used carelessly or stored improperly they can become a serious hazard.

Did you know one-third of all hand tool injuries involve cutting tools like knives: It only takes a fraction of a second of inattention or poor judgment to suffer a serious injury.

Everyone knows the golden rules in knife safety:

Always wear cut-resistant gloves (Level 4 or higher).

Always cut away from your body.

Always use a sharp knife, dull blades slip.

Always secure material on a solid surface before cutting.

Be aware where the knife will go if it accidentally slips.

Always inspect your tools. Never use dull, bent, or broken knives.

Never use a knife as a screwdriver or pry bar.

Never attempt to catch a falling knife.

Never throw or toss a knife-or point one at another employee.

Remember to clean and lubricate your cutting tools regularly.

One more rule that often gets overlooked:

If the knife isn't in use, it must be retracted or stored in a sheath. Always.

Let's be honest: how many of us have an exposed fixed-blade knife clipped to our vest pocket or shoved into the "plier pouch" of our pants? Is it in a sheath? If not, it should be. Unprotected blades can easily puncture clothing and skin: especially in the event of a slip, fall, or even just reaching for something.

Over the years, we've had several serious injuries from unsafe knife storage. One example: A knife left on top of an 8' ladder during break time. The excuse: "I've done it for years, never been a problem." My response: It always works—until it doesn't. What are you willing to risk to keep following unsafe habits: your fingers, your coworker's face, someone's future?

Remember This!

Complacency is a major cause of knife injuries. We get too comfortable, we skip steps, we take shortcuts: and the consequences are real.

Let's stay sharp: literally and mentally. Use knives the right way, store them the safe way, and look out for one another.

Retract it. Sheath it. Or don't use it.