

# Safety Meeting Topic

## Knife Safety

June 2011

With box cutters and utility knives being so common and easy to use, some people make the mistake of thinking that they are completely safe to use. Even using a so-called “safety knife” has some risk if the safety knife is used incorrectly. Therefore it is very important to follow safe knife handling procedures at all times.

Utility knives and box cutters are common in today’s workplace. Utility knives are used in a variety of applications such as shipping, receiving, grocery store stocking, restaurant work, meat packing, construction, manufacturing, and more. In fact, all places where boxes, cartons, bags, shrink wrap and other materials must be cut or opened, you will find utility knives and cutters.

Occupational hand injuries in the workplace are all too common. It is estimated that more than \$3,000 worth of health care, worker's compensation and loss in productivity can be attributed to just one cut or laceration to the hand. In fact, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) estimates that more than \$300 million is spent for hand lacerations each year.

### Provided below are some additional knife safety tips to consider:

- Point the blade away from yourself when cutting. Make sure no body parts are in the cutting path. Also, be certain that other people are at a safe distance before cutting.
- When not in use, see that you store your knife or cutter in a safe location. make sure the blade is safely stored away.
- Knives with retractable blades should have the blade retracted immediately after use. Self retracting safety knives do this automatically, thereby protecting you and others without extra effort.
- Utility knives, box cutters or any safety knives or cutters should be discarded or repaired if not working properly. The safety features of knives and cutters should not be circumvented or removed. Knives with damaged safety mechanisms should be discarded.
- Utility knives work best when they're sharp. They are easier to operate and safer to use when sharp.
- Dispose of dull or rusty blades in a blade disposal container. Never discard loose blades in the garbage or leave them where they can injure an unsuspecting person.
- Use knives and cutters for their intended purpose. Using your knife in a way in which they were not designed or on the wrong materials can damage the blade and cause injury to yourself or others.
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- If a knife is falling, even a safety knife, you risk injury by trying to stop it with your hand or foot. Let the knife fall to the ground rather than trying to grab it as it falls.
- Do not toss a knife to someone. It is also recommended that you do not hand a knife directly to someone. Set down the knife and let the other person pick it up.



*Choose the right tool for the job. There are many different types for your kind of job!*

If you have questions about this safety topic please contact EH&S at (480) 965-1823 or [EHS@asu.edu](mailto:EHS@asu.edu).