



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 30 – July 20 – July 24, 2020
Knife Safety

Introduction

Knives are a common tool in the workplace but can easily and quickly cause a serious injury if not used properly. Lacerations are one of the highest categories of injuries in the workplace. These injuries are avoidable if employees are equipped with the correct tools and safety procedures to perform their job. This week we will discuss safe work practices for knife use in the workplace.

Monday – Use the Right Tool for the Job

All tools are unique and built for specific types of tasks. In the case of knives in the workplace, using the wrong tool could cause a serious injury. Here are some factors to consider before a knife is used as a tool in the workplace.

- What kind of blade is appropriate for the job? Should it be firm or flexible. What sharpness is required? Can a retractable blade be used in this application?
- Does the knife have a handle with a secure grip? Does it have an ergonomic design to alleviate injuries from repetitive motion?
- Is a knife the most appropriate tool for the job? Is there a safer tool that can be used instead or a different process?

Tuesday – Safety Tips for Knife Use in the Workplace

Once the correct type of knife is identified for the job, each employee should be trained on the specific safety instructions required for that specific knife and process. Below are some general safety tips that should be followed for knife use.

- Never touch a knife blade.
- Always cut away from your body.
- Keep fingers out of the cutting line.
- Use the appropriate personal protective equipment. i.e. The correctly rated cut resistant gloves.
- Always cut on a stable surface.
- Keep knives well maintained and properly stored.

Wednesday – Keep Knives Well Maintained and Properly Stored

Today we are going to expand on the last safety tip we discussed yesterday, how to keep your knife maintained and how to properly store it. A dull or rusty knife is far more dangerous than an appropriately sharp and well-maintained knife.

- Before use, inspect the knife in your work area to identify safety hazards such as dullness, rust or broken blades.
- Make sure spare blades are readily available to replace a damaged blade if needed. Employees are less likely to struggle to use a damaged blade if a replacement is on hand.
- Properly dispose of used blades in a safe blade disposal container, blades thrown in the trash can injure whoever is disposing of that material.
- Store the knives in a dry location to prevent rust and in a designated area so co-workers are not injured by a misplaced knife when attempting to reach for a tool or material.

Thursday – Knife Use Safety Assessment

The most full proof means of reducing a hazard is eliminating the need to perform the high risk activity. Today we will discuss how to conduct a safety assessment for knife use in your workplace. Here are some questions to consider when conducting your assessment.



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- Identify where knives are used in your area.
- Perform a risk assessment for knife use for that operation. What is the frequency that a knife is used for that task? What is the likelihood an injury will occur? What will be the expected severity of the injury if it did occur?
- Is there a better tool that could be used for that operation that would make your workplace safer? If not, are your employees properly trained on the safety requirements for the knife and procedure?
- Do they have the appropriate PPE?

Friday – Discussion

This week we have covered several aspects of knife safety in the workplace. Now let's take a minute to discuss your experience with knife use in your area.

- Have you ever been injured by a knife while at work? Have you witnessed an injury? Do you think that injury was avoidable if proper safety steps were followed?
- Do you use a knife in your daily activities at work? Do you think there is a better tool you could use instead?