Safe Knife Handling

Toolbox Talks are intended to facilitate health and safety discussions. Find more Toolbox Talks on the Occupational Safety web page.

General Information
The most common concern with using blades while working is an injury, such as a cut (e.g., laceration, puncture) or an amputation.

Proper Use
- Keep knives sharp. A sharp knife makes cutting easier and reduces the risk of applying unsafe pressure while cutting.
- Always cut away from yourself, ensuring no body parts are in the cutting path.
- Only use a knife for its intended purpose. A knife should not be used as a pry bar, can opener, chisel, punch, scraper, or screwdriver.
- Be aware of the blade location at all times.
- Carry the knife pointed down, blade retracted or folded away.
- Place the item to be cut on a stable surface, securing the item with a holding device or with a protected hand.
- Keep the work area clean. Any materials on the floor could create a slip hazard.
- Use protective clothing such as cut resistant gloves, especially for the holding hand. Safety glasses can protect eyes if the blade shatters or breaks.

Knife Handling Safety Tips
- Seek guidance and training on safe use practices.
- Limit cutting above your head.
- Avoid using excessive pressure when cutting.
- Let the knife fall, then pick it up. Do not try to catch it.
- Stop cutting if you need to focus on something else.
- Do not put a knife in a sink full of soapy water. Wash the knife immediately after use.