



A MINI TRAINING SESSION FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Quick Take on Safety

Utility Knife Safety

TRAINING OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- Overview:** This talk covers some of the main hazards associated with utility knives and methods to prevent injuries when using them.
- Purpose:** Refresh employees about the main hazards and best practices to take prevent injuries when using utility knives.
- Preparation:**
- Read and become familiar with this Quick Take. *Change as needed to reflect procedures and personnel in your department.*
 - Review the utility knives at the facility and bring a selection to this training to display and review.
- Handouts:** Quick Review of Safety—Utility Knife Safety
- Notes:** Many newer utility knives or box cutters incorporate additional safety features, including self-retracting blades or shielded knife surfaces. Consider replacing older knives that lack these safety features.

Utility Knife Overview and Hazards

[*Instructor Prompt:* Begin with a few general questions to get people thinking about hazards with knives. Examples include: How can you get hurt with a utility knife? What kinds of injuries are most common?]

Approximately 39 percent of injuries involving manual workshop tools included knives with retractable blades, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The majority of these injuries are caused by lacerations, but injuries can also occur from ejected pieces of snapped blades or from improperly disposed blades and ergonomic injuries from blade use.

Fortunately, these injuries can be largely prevented with some simple best practices. So please pay attention; we don't want you to get hurt.

Best Practices

[*Instructor Prompt:* Consider holding an example of one of the utility knives used in your facility to demonstrate safety features, safe usage or simply examples of the different types and styles available to employees. When demonstrating, keep safety in mind.]

- Use a sharp blade. Dull blades require more pressure and increase the risk of slippage or other potential injuries, including ergonomic strain.
- Use safety knives with rounded tips or self-retracting blades wherever possible.

- Plan the cut before cutting and keep your eye on the blade throughout the process. Keep your hands or extremities out of the path of the blade.
- Inspect the tool before use to ensure that the blade is in its proper position and undamaged.
- Wear safety glasses to protect against broken blades. [*Instructor Note:* consideration should be given to providing cut-resistant gloves if the amount of utility knife usage warrants such personal protective equipment.]
- Keep the blade extended as short as necessary to make the cut.
- Cut away from your body, rather than pulling toward you.
- Do not try to force the blade if it becomes stuck.
- Hand knives to others handle first with the blade retracted.
- Store the knife with the blade fully retracted. [*Instructor Note:* Consider providing belt mounted knife sheaths to give employees a safe place to store and carry knives when not in use. Ensure any holders are designed for knives with the appropriate sheath to prevent injuries.]
- Use the knife for the intended purpose; they are not designed to pry objects.
- Dispose of old blades in a puncture resistant container.
- Breakaway blade models are not designed for heavy-duty industrial use and should not be used for heavy work.
- Change blades carefully according to manufacturer recommendations with the correct size of blades.
- Use the right knife for the job or for your hand, particularly if using the knife for a long time. Knives that are too short can put uncomfortable pressure points into the palm of the hand, while larger knives can be unwieldy to use.
- If knives are equipped with safety features, such as a self-retracting blade, do not bypass these safety features. They are there to keep you and others safe.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How else can we prevent injuries when using utility knives or box cutters?

Utility Knife Safety Session Planning and Review

Trainer

Training
Date

Department(s)

TRAINING GOALS

- Inform employees of the main hazards associated with using utility knives, not just cuts.
- Employees learn and practice safer utility knife use.

RESOURCES

- “Box Cutter Safety,” Carleton University—Environmental Health and Safety, Carleton.ca
- “Utility Knife Safety,” Western Michigan University, WMich.edu
- “The Utility Knife,” Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation, BWC.Ohio.gov
- “Preventing Cuts and Lacerations,” Safety and Health Magazine—National Safety Council, SafetyandHealthMagazine.com

REVIEW

Did the training meet the stated goals?

How can the training be improved?

TRAINER COMMENTS

