Safety Newsletter

KNIFE AND BOX CUTTER SAFETY

Utility knives and box cutters can be one of the most frequently used tools in many workplace environments. While cutting is a task often thought of as just a basic, simple work day function by many employees, the truth is, a box cutter can be dangerous because of the sharp blade and the high repetition of use. Roughly 30 percent of all workplace injuries involve cuts or lacerations, with about 70 percent of those injuries being to the hands or fingers. However, there are some safety precautions you can take to prevent workplace injuries due to box cutters. Follow proper safety procedures and use the right tools for the task can help to keep everyone safe.

Box Cutter Safety. Here are some safety tips to follow that will help ensure that box cutters are being used in a safe, efficient manner:

- Always cut in a direction away from your body.
- Many box cutters carry replacement blades inside the handle so it is important to be careful when opening the handle so as not let the extra blades fall out.
- If you drop a cutting tool, stand back and let it fall. Never try to catch it!
- Stay sharp! Sharp blades will cut cleanly through a box. Dull blades will tug and pull, which is more likely to cause hand slipping and cuts to your fingers.
- Cut away from your body with even pressure.
- Stay focused and keep your eyes on your work while using a box cutter. If you are interrupted while using a box cutter, put it down in a flat, safe place.
- Place your box cutter in their holder when not in use.
- Always pass a box cutter handle first and with the blade retracted. Like all tools, never throw a box cutter to a coworker.
- When cutting cardboard, extend the blade only to the thickness needed to cut the cardboard. This not only prevents damage to items inside the box, but also improves cutting leverage.
- Wear cut resistant gloves. Cut resistant gloves will not prevent all cuts from occurring, but will minimize the potential for injury when used properly.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY: YOUR SAFETY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

People go to work every day, but don't expect to be injured. You have a right to a safe and healthful work environment. But employers are not the only ones responsible for your safety. You are, too.

We all share the responsibility for encouraging a safety culture to improve behavior and performance in the workplace. We all share accountability to encourage our peers to value safe work practices and safety programs in a positive, proactive way.

Here's how you can do it.

Get involved. If you think a job or a task is unsafe, stop the work. If you see something unsafe, report it. Make a commitment today to take an active role in safety. Don't wait until something happens and an injury takes over your life.

- Follow established safety policies and procedures.
- Maintain your personal work area in a clean and orderly manner.
- Wear, maintain and properly store your personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Attending all safety training.
- Volunteer to serve on your Safety Committee.
- Using safe work practices to eliminate slips, trips and falls.
- Lifting safely and helping others to do the same.
- Labeling all chemical containers and becoming familiar with Safety Data Sheets.
- Know evacuation procedures and the location of emergency equipment.

Speak up. Talk to your supervisor if you have safety concerns. No one knows your job and tools better than you do. Never operate equipment or machinery unless you've been properly trained. Give suggestions to make a process or equipment safer. Immediately notify your co-workers and supervisor of any damaged equipment, hazardous conditions, or unsafe behavior. Promptly report all injuries, illnesses and near misses to your supervisor. By getting involved and speaking up, you'll gain confidence, leadership skills and a sense of ownership that will help you identify job hazards and take the appropriate precautions to protect yourself and others.

TOP 10 WORKPLACE SAFETY TIPS

1. **Be Aware of Your Surroundings**. Know the particular hazards of your job and workplace.
2. **Keep Correct Posture To Protect Your Back**. If you work at a desk, keep your shoulders in line with your hips to avoid back problems. If you're picking things up, use correct lifting techniques so your back doesn't get hurt. Avoid stooping and twisting.
3. **Take Regular Breaks**. So many work-related injuries occur because a worker is tired, burned out, or not alert to their surroundings. Take regular breaks to help you stay fresh on the job.
4. **Use Tools and Machines Properly**. Taking shortcuts is one of the leading cause of workplace injury. It's a huge safety risk to use scaffolding as a ladder or one tool in place of another for a specific job.
5. **Keep Emergency Exits Easily Accessible.** In case of an emergency, you'll need quick, easy access to the exits.

6.**Report Unsafe Conditions to Your Supervisor**. Your supervisor needs to be informed about any workplace safety hazards or risks.

7.**Use Mechanical Aids Whenever Possible**. Instead of attempting to carry or lift something that's really heavy in an attempt to save a sliver of time, take ab extra minute to use a wheelbarrow, cart, dolly, or forklift. Too many injuries happen while trying to lift something that weighs too much.

8.**Stay Sober.** When a worker's ability to exercise judgment, coordination, motor control, concentration or alertness is compromised, this leads to any number of risks for workplace injury and fatalities.

9.**Reduce Workplace Stress**. Stress can lead to depression and concentration problems. Common causes of workplace stress include long hours, heavy workload, job insecurity and conflicts with coworkers or managers.

10.**Wear the Correct Safety Equipment**. Depending on the job, equipment like earplugs, earmuffs, hard hats, safety goggles, or gloves greatly reduce the risk of workplace injury.

IT IS HOT!
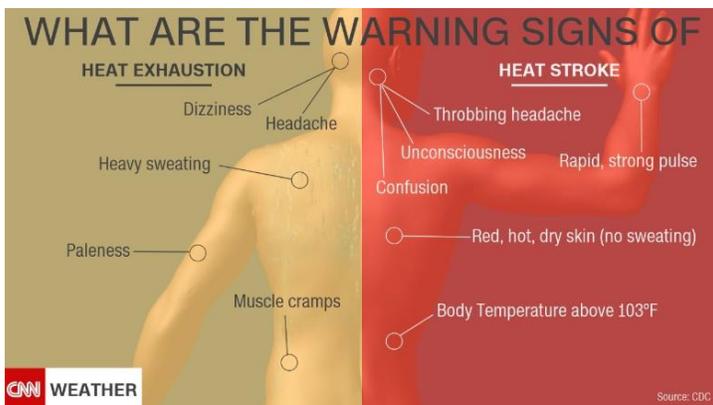
The hot days of summer are here and will continue for a while. Throughout California, thousands of employees who work outdoors face the potential dangers associated with overexposure to heat. Factors such as working in direct sunlight, high temperature and humidity, physical exertion and lack of sufficient water intake can lead to heat stress. During the warm season, it is important to understand that exposure to heat can cause serious illness or death. Exposure to heat can cause heat cramps and rashes. The most serious heat-related disorders are heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Symptoms include confusion; irrational behavior; loss of consciousness; hot, dry skin; and abnormally high body temperature. Drinking cool water, reducing physical exertion, wearing appropriate clothing and regular rest periods in a cool recovery area can lessen the effects of working in summer heat.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THE SUN

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts, and skin cancer. The amount of damage from UV exposure depends on the strength of the light, the length of exposure, and whether the skin is protected.

There are no safe UV rays or safe suntans.

Skin Cancer. Sun exposure at any age can cause skin cancer. Be especially careful in the sun if you burn easily, spend a lot of time outdoors, or have any of the following physical features:
- Numerous, irregular, or large moles.
- Freckles.
- Fair skin.
- Blond, red, or light brown hair.

Self-Examination. It's important to examine your body monthly because skin cancers detected early can almost always be cured. The most important warning sign is a spot on the skin that is changing in size, shape, or color during a period of 1 month to 1 or 2 years. Skin cancers often take the following forms:
- Pale, wax-like, pearly nodules.
- Red, scaly, sharply outlined patches.
- Sores that don't heal.
- Small, mole-like growths—melanoma,
- the most serious type of skin cancer.

If you find such unusual skin changes, see a health care professional immediately.

Block Out UV Rays.

Cover up. Wear tightly-woven clothing that blocks out light. Try this test: Place your hand between a single layer of the clothing and a light source. If you can see your hand through the fabric, the garment offers little protection.

Use sunscreen. A sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 blocks 93 percent of UV rays. You want to block both UVA and UVB rays to guard against skin cancer.

Wear a hat. A wide brim hat is ideal - it protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.

Wear UV-absorbent shades. Sunglasses should block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation.

Limit exposure. If you're unsure about the sun's intensity, take the shadow test: If your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are the day's strongest.

Preventing Skin Cancer

For more information about preventing, detecting, and treating skin cancer, check out these sources:

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org 1-800-ACS-2345

The Skin Cancer Foundation
www.skincancer.org 1-800-SKIN-490

<u>DON'T BRING FIDO TO WORK!</u>

As tempting as it may be, pets are not allowed in the workplace. If you love your dog and you hate to see him home alone all day, sometimes it is tempting to brink Fido to work. But, remember, School District Policy does not allow employees to bring their pets to work. Of course, Service Animals, are allowed – but they are on-the-job!

Central Region
School Insurance Group
CRSIG