

Safe Guarded Knives

COMMUNICATIONS

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Weekly ES&H Toolbox Talk

FACTOID:

According to National Safety Council Injury Facts 2005-2006 Edition, the average cost of any laceration in the work place is \$13,948.

In 2005, 36% of all sub-contractor and 12% of all Bechtel Communications injuries were caused by lacerations. The extremely high numbers were ultimately caused by performing job tasks while using the following risk behaviors:

- **Using unguarded utility knives**
- **Using personal (pocket) knives**
- **Using box cutters**
- **Not wearing PPE**



Hand knife injuries usually happen when an unguarded blade slips during cutting or trimming. In most cases the blade comes into contact with the worker's other hand, causing a laceration to the hand and/or fingers. Injuries do also occur to other parts of the body, including the knife hand itself. As a result, all non-guarded knives or utility knives/box cutters were prohibited on all Bechtel Communication Projects.

Bechtel researched solutions to eradicate the opportunities for future laceration injuries. As a result, new tools were identified, tested in the field and deemed adequate to perform all of the necessary cutting tasks, while providing protection. To that end, Bechtel only allows the use of hand knives that operate with a safety spring that causes automatic blade retraction into the handle during any uncontrolled movement or when pressure is no longer applied to the blade.

Do your hand knives manually retract into the handle housing?

If so, you are using a prohibited hand knife that should be taken out of operation and replaced with a safety knife that's blade retracts at the end of the cut regardless of the users thumb position on the slider. This safety mechanism is commonly referred to as an "auto-retractable" blade.

There are various safety knife manufactures that offer auto-retractable mechanism knives that are acceptable for use in the field and office.

Martor USA, offers the largest range of safety knives, safety cutters and box cutters with unique, patented safety features.

For product information please visit www.martorusa.com.

Use Your Hand Knife Safely

Protect your eyes and hands. Many hand knives have blades that can break and fly off in random directions under excess pressure. Fully extended traditional blades are also prone to this effect. Safety glasses and gloves will protect your eyes and hands in the event of a broken blade mishap.

Stay sharp.

A dull blade will force you to use more pressure, which can lead to safety knife slips and jumps. Replace the blade on your utility knife as soon as you notice it tearing material instead of cutting.

Tighten up.

Before using a utility knife, make

sure that the blade is securely fastened. Also, check to make sure the blade access door and handles locked and closed.

Test/Inspect.

Prior to use, check the blades auto-retract mechanism functionality. Make sure the retractable spring is not damaged, depleted or jammed with any unusual objects. If the retractable blade is not functioning properly, tag safety knife, take out of service, then replace.

Make sure to pull.

When cutting, pull the blade instead of pushing it. A pulling motion gives you more power and control over the utility knife, resulting in a safer cut.



Clamp down.

If you're using a straight edge to direct your cut, make sure it is clamped to the material to be cut. If it's not practical to clamp the straight edge, place your hands well clear of the line of the cut.

Using a thick straight edge will keep the blade from "jumping the tracks" while you cut.

Take your time.

If you're cutting thick or hard material, use several shallow cuts instead of one deep one. A number of lighter passes with the blade will reduce the chance of dangerous slips or jumps

The reasoning is simple: If employees have access to a good, useable tool, they will use it, preventing potential injury and product damage. In all facets of today's workplace, the safety knife is making its presence and use known.