

## Utility Knife Safety

### 5-Minute Talk

#### Overview of topic

Utility knives are a handy tool used by construction and trade workers on jobsites throughout the country. Commonly, this knife consists of a handle with a retractable razor blade. Because of the frequent use, injuries caused by utility knives are a common occurrence.

#### Hazardous to your health

The greatest hazard from using a utility knife is getting cut. This happens because the following reasons:

- The blade is not retracted and the user forgets that.
- The knife slips off the material being cut. This can occur because of improper force (too little or too much) being applied to the material.
- The material shifts while being cut and the blade injures the user. The razor blade breaks and strikes the worker. This sometimes happens when the razor blade is dull and the user has to exert excessive force to cut the material.
- The worker cuts toward his or her body and is injured when the blade slips or breaks.
- The user is not watching the blade when performing the cut and is injured when it strikes some part of his or her body.
- While changing out a dull or broken blade, the worker is cut by the dull blade or by the new blade.

#### How to avoid being injured

What can you do to prevent being injured while using a utility knife? Follow these basic rules when using a utility knife:

- Retract the razor blade into the handle when not using the knife.
- Replace the razor blade when it becomes dull or broken.
- Make sure the material being cut is held securely so it can't shift or move.
- Concentrate on the material to be cut and watch the blade at all times.
- Apply a consistent, firm (but not excessive) pressure while performing the cut.
- Always cut away from your body, rather than toward it.



- Be careful when changing dull or damaged blades.
- Dispose of blades in a safe manner. Put them in a metal container if possible.

## **Employee training**

You are required to train workers in how to safely operate tools and equipment.

## **Training tips**

During training demonstrate the proper way to use the utility knife and how to change the blades. Discuss the proper disposal of used blades.

## **Where to go for more information:**

29 CFR 1926.21, Safety training and education.

29 CFR 1926.300, Tools-Hand and power, General requirements.

