

Tailgate Talk

Information You Can Use to Prevent Accidents & Injuries

Cutting Tool Safety

Hand-held cutting tools are frequently used in the workplace. The tools range from scissors, razors, saws, and knives to pruners, chisels, and snips. While these tools are very different and can be used for a wide variety of jobs, they have some common hazards and safety precautions.

Cutting tools are very sharp and can cause cuts and puncture wounds, if they're not handled properly. You should be trained in the tool manufacturer's directions for proper use, including how to inspect, maintain, and sharpen the tool. For some tools, you must wear personal protective equipment such as safety glasses and well-fitting gloves.

In order to choose the right tool for the job, consider not only the job task but the type, hardness, and size of the material on which you'll be working. Substituting the wrong tool for the job can lead to an accident or injury. Use only quality tools that are sharp and in good condition. If a tool is broken, dull or damaged, it should be tagged as such and taken out of service.

The most important rule to remember about using cutting tools is to ALWAYS cut away from the body and face. When cutting with one hand, always know where your other hand is. If a sharp tool is dropped, don't try to catch it but allow it to fall, making sure that your legs and feet are out of the way.

The safe way to work with a cutting tool is to concentrate on the task at hand, making straight, even cuts without rocking, prying or twisting the tool. Hammering or applying excessive force or pressure to a cutting tool can cause it to slip. Keep in mind, that some materials or outdoor conditions can also make tools slippery.

Be careful when transporting and storing sharp tools. Don't carry a sharp tool in your pocket; use a sheath, belt or apron; and when there's a pause in work, hold the tool a safe distance from the body. When walking with a sharp tool, the tool should be carried with the blade down and away from the body.

When climbing with a sharp tool, tool belts or buckets with hand lines should be used so you can have both hands to grip the ladder. When passing a cutting tool to another worker, it should be passed with the hand first and the blade down; a cutting tool should never be tossed from one worker to another.

When not in use, cutting tools should be stored in a sturdy tool box or on a tool rack with the sharp edges suitably covered. Otherwise, they should be placed near the back of work benches to keep handles or blades from extending over the edge.

Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations.