

## Safety Note #179

### Utility Knife Safety



According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the most common types of knives involved in accidents that cause injury are utility, box, and pocket knives. Between 1990 and 2008, 47% of all knife injuries (1,169,960 injuries), were related to utility knives. Utility knives are very sharp due to the blade being a razor. One wrong move and these retractable blades can cause serious injury. Retractable utility knives are very common in the workplace and employees should be aware of the hazards when using them. Safe work practices should be followed when using a utility knife.

#### **For safe use of a retractable utility knife, please review and use the following procedures:**

- Only cut materials appropriate for utility knives, such as thin cardboard, paper, thin plastics, or shrink wrap.
- Inspect the utility knife for damage and dull blade prior to use. Replace the blade if necessary or remove the knife from use if it is in need of repair.
- Wear safety glasses to protect your eyes in case the blade breaks.
- No horseplay when using a utility knife. It's not a throwing knife.
- Do not apply too much pressure on the blade. It can snap off the handle.
- Do not try to cut more than the knife can handle.
- Do not use utility knives to pry objects loose. Use the proper tool for the task.
- Ensure the blade is properly positioned in the handle before use.
- Always use a sharp blade. Dull blades are NOT safe!
- Keep hands, fingers, arms, and legs out of the cutting path.
- Always cut away from the body. Cutting toward the body increases the potential for a laceration injury.
- Only purchase and use utility knives with retractable blades.
- Use a self-retracting utility knife if available.
- Retract the blade when not in use. Do not store utility knives in the open position.
- When handing a utility knife to a co-worker, retract the blade and position the handle towards the other person.
- Do not wear open toe shoes when using a utility knife. It can fall and cause a puncture injury.
- Do not dispose used blades in a trash can. A custodian could be injured taking the trash out of the can.
- Dispose of dull blades in a plastic container with a lid or old coffee can with a lid or other container appropriate for non-hazardous sharps waste. Label the container as containing sharps waste.
- If an injury occurs while using a utility knife, seek first aid or medical assistance as needed. Report all injuries to your supervisor.