

## Sharpen Your Safety Awareness

Sharp instruments and tools are essential to many kinds of work, but sharp or pointed objects can be hazardous and often cause painful injuries. Injuries include cuts, punctures, nicks, and gashes that can lead to serious infections or diseases. These injuries can be prevented through employee training, protective gloves, machine guards, and proper equipment maintenance.

Prevent injuries from sharp objects by taking safety precautions:

- Select the right tool for the job. Use sharp items only as they were designed. Sharpen cutting tools and knives on a regular basis. Dull blades require more force and may be more likely to slip, cutting the handler

- Wear gloves resistant to punctures, cuts, or moisture. Choose gloves based on the hazards normally expected for the task.

- Let falling objects fall. Don't grab for falling cutting tools, sharp instruments or glassware.

- It's better to clean up a mess or replace the item rather than risk injury or infection

- Store sharps safely. Take the time to ensure that instruments can be reached easily but pose no threat of injury. Don't carry loose sharp items in your pocket. Store cutting instruments in drawers or racks when not in use.

- Follow cleanup precautions at all times. Dispose of defective sharps and chipped or cracked glassware properly. Wear gloves, or use a damp towel to pick up broken glass.

- Don't reach into wastebaskets or disposal containers with bare hands, they could contain broken glass or sharps. Sharp material poking through bags can easily cut unprotected hands or legs. Check disposal bags before lifting to see if they are overloaded or likely to break. Lift plastic bags from their tie-off point and paper bags by their edges whenever possible and hold bags away from the body. Never "bear hug" a bag.

- Make sure guards are in place on machinery with cutting blades.

Improper handling of sharp objects is one of the leading causes of injuries from them. Don't rush or take shortcuts when handling sharp equipment or tools. Protect yourself and others by handling sharp objects safely.

- Know the risks

- Follow safe handling and disposal procedures

- Report all injuries and get proper medical treatment

Protecting yourself and your co-workers is an important part of your job. The right combination of attitude and action can prevent most injuries from sharp instruments and tools.

