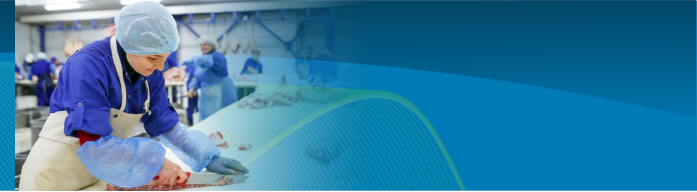


# Safety Facts: Knife Safety\*



Cut injuries in the Manufacturing, food processing, wine making, brewing and distillery industries occur primarily through the use of knives, cleavers and slicing equipment. Cut injuries are one of the leading causes of injuries in abattoirs, fish, poultry and meat processing operations, as well as hospitality tasting rooms associated with the beverage industries.

## Consequences of Laceration Type Injuries

Amputation of fingers or serious cuts to hands cause irreparable nerve and muscle and tendon damage. These are life changing injuries to those that enjoy playing musical instruments or other activities that require dexterity and nerve response.

## Mechanism of Injury

- Knife cuts can occur because the blade is not sharp enough so additional force is used to make the cut or the worker attempts to use a knife not designed for the task. Both result in excessive pressure to force the blade through the material being cut.
- Improper or insufficient guarding on slicers can be a source for serious cuts and amputations.
- Distraction of the person using the knife or slicer causing them to take their eyes off the task of cutting can lead to serious cuts or amputations.
- Reaching into storage drawers or dishwasher where unprotected knives are not visible can lead to puncture type injuries.

## Associated Risks

- Training and supervision—ensure that workers receive the necessary training, mentoring and supervision to use knives and other sharp-bladed equipment safely.
- Conduct workplace inspections to ensure unsafe conditions do not develop, including the workplace environment such as, floor conditions, lighting, height of working surfaces, spacing of workers, slipping and tripping hazards and that safe guards are in place on slicers.
- Knife Inspection and maintenance—ensure that knives are inspected by users on regular basis, are properly sharpened and are removed from service if damaged or excessively worn.
- Housekeeping ensure that areas where knives and slicers are used are kept clear of slipping and tripping hazards, if this is impractical ensure that workers are wearing footwear with enhanced traction for wet and slippery conditions.



## Preventative Next Steps

- Use the right knife—identify the right type of knives required for your operations.
- Ensure safe storage for knives/blades—both belt sheaths and racks or slots for fixed storage.
- Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment such as cut-resistant gloves, gauntlets and aprons as required by hazards present.

## A worker should take the following steps to reduce the risk of injury.

- Inspect knives on a regular basis and remove any damaged knives from service immediately.
- Keep blades sharp at all times and handles firmly affixed to the blade.
- Use the proper knife for the task; carving, boning or paring.
- Never service or clean a slicer while it is energized.
- Always cut away from your body.
- Never use a knife as a hook to pull material toward you.
- Use a stabilizing tool whenever possible instead of your fingers.



**For additional resources visit:**

*Work Safe BC*

