



Cuts cut productivity and profits in food processing

Cuts: A serious problem for the food processing industry

Cuts generally occur while using knives, cleavers, or slicing machinery, especially in meat and fish production.

In the Washington State food processing industry:

- Cuts are second only to sprains in the number of workers' compensation claims reported.
- Approximately 1000 claims are accepted each year for cut injuries.
- Over one million state fund dollars are spent annually to care for these cut injuries.
- 10% of workers injured by cuts had to be off work for 4 or more days to recover from their injuries.

Safety training prevents cuts

Workplaces that emphasize safety tend to have fewer injuries and a more positive work environment. Safety training is a key component:

- ✓ Train all employees on appropriate lock out procedures.
- ✓ Train all employees to properly operate machinery such as meat slicers, and to follow safe job procedures including knife use, cleaning, and storage.

The enclosed *Blade Safety Tips for Food Processing* can help you emphasize safety. Use it as an outline for discussion at your next safety meeting. Leave copies in the breakroom.



Would you like help designing a safety plan?

The Department of Labor and Industries has resources to help you design a safe and healthy workplace.

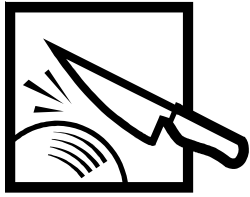
- Consultation services are available at your request. For more information or to contact a consultant in your area see the website:

SafetyConsultants.LNI.wa.gov

- SHARP conducts research regarding occupational illness and injury. SHARP can also provide suggestions to make your workplace safer.

Phone **1-888-66-SHARP** or Web site **SHARPLNI.wa.gov**





BLADE SAFETY TIPS FOR FOOD PROCESSING

Use safe techniques

1. **Cut AWAY from, not toward, your body** to avoid cutting yourself. When slicing, stand to the side of the cut to keep the blade away from your body.
2. **Use a stabilizing tool**, not your fingers, for steadiness. Keep your fingers in view and away from the cutting area to avoid slicing them.
3. **Use food pushers**, not your hands, to advance food in machines. Never put your finger near a moving part or blade. Not even to 'just brush something off.'
4. **Make sure all guards and safety devices are in place** on meat slicers and other cutting machinery. These devices are designed to protect your hands from the blades and your clothing from catching in the moving parts of the slicer. Do not use the machine if these devices are not in place.
5. **Wear appropriate gloves** for your job. Use cut resistant gloves for high production jobs. However remember they are cut resistant, *not* cut proof - injuries can still occur. Make sure the gloves fit properly.
6. **Use a cutting board** for safe cutting or chopping. Never hold items in your hand while cutting or slicing.
7. **Use the correct knife** for the job. For example, use carving knives for large jobs, boning knives to remove meat from the bone, paring knives for slicing small jobs.

Keep knives and slicers in good working order

1. **Keep knives and blades sharp.** Dull blades tend to slip, whereas sharp blades improve accuracy and performance. They also decrease strain and fatigue in the worker.
2. **Tighten or replace loose handles.** If a knife cannot be repaired properly, throw it out.



Sanitation Note:

If you work with a variety of raw meat products, wear vinyl gloves over cut resistant gloves. Why? This keeps your cut resistant gloves clean and usable longer. Be sure the vinyl gloves fit snugly to improve blade control. Change them between types of meat.



Ergo Note:

Sharp knives help prevent musculoskeletal injuries in the meat-cutting industry. How? Sharp blades reduce grip force and cutting time.

McGorry, R. Dowd, P. Dempsey, P. "Cutting moments and grip forces in meat cutting operations and the effect of knife sharpness." *Applied Ergonomics*, Volume 34, Issue 4, July 2003, Pages 375-382.