

# How to Stay SAFE on Fishing's Cutting Edge

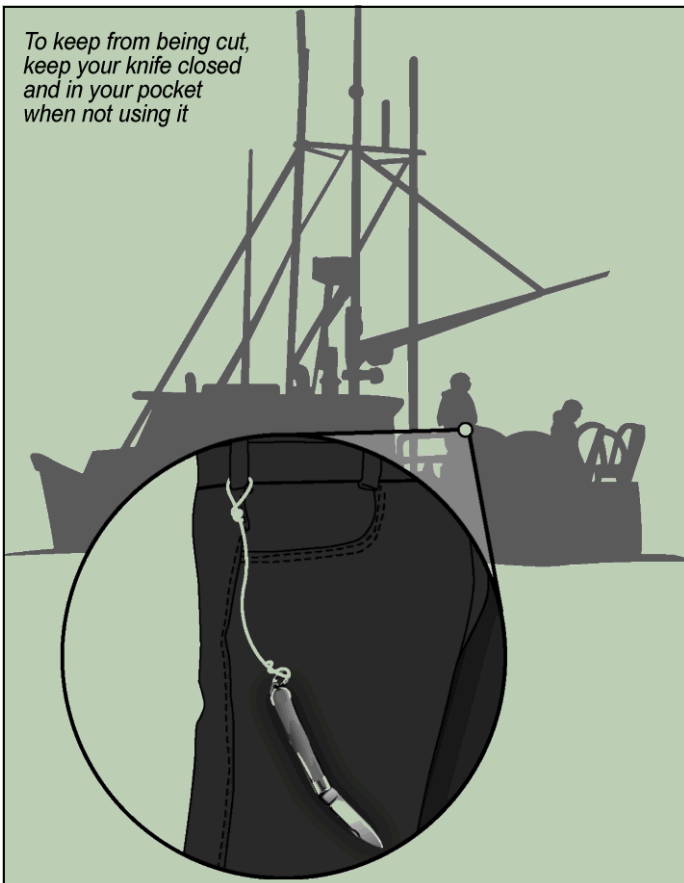


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for WorkSafeBC

**K**nives are probably the most widely used tools in commercial fishing, whether working on nets, troll, trap, longline or other gear, as well as for dressing fish and cutting bait. While essential to your work, knives can put fishermen at serious risk of being cut so badly that they can't work.

Injuries from knives accounted for 1 in 12 WorkSafeBC wage loss claims in your industry over the last five years. Looking at your top injuries, knife injuries place third after sprains with their related problems, and broken bones. Trap and longline fishermen suffered the most knife injuries, followed by trawl, gillnet, troll and seine fishermen.

In some fishing operations, knives may literally be accidents waiting to happen when they are temporarily left in piles of bait or gear or otherwise out of view. Here are other common factors to watch out for:



- Tripping while working on a net with an open knife dangling on its lanyard.
- Cutting or chopping bait while paying attention to another crewmember.
- The user stepping on the knife after forgetting where he put it.
- Sharpening a knife with a steel that has no hand protection, while watching something else.

Even for experienced fishermen, it's worth repeating these basic principles that can prevent knife injuries;

- Whenever possible, draw the knife away from you to cut and slice, and use the full length of the blade, especially if there is potential for it to stick or slip.
- With folding or jack knives, remember that they may close unexpectedly.
- Never leave an exposed blade dangling on a lanyard when the knife isn't in use.
- When sharpening a blade on a stone or with steel, give each side the same number of strokes, at the same angle and with equal pressure. Move the blade away from your body if there is no hand protection.

For green deck hands, here are Harvey's ten commandments of knife safety. Thou shall:

1. Use knives only to cut and slice, never as can openers, pry bars, screwdrivers or other tools.
2. Cut on appropriate, firmly-fixed surfaces whenever possible,
3. Keep your knives sharp; dull blades are more likely to stick and require force to complete a cut.
4. Use the right knife for the right job; for instance, jack knives on nets and kitchen knives in the galley.
5. Hand-wash knives; never soak a dirty knife in a suds-filled sink because it's dangerous to have a sharp blade lurking where you can't see it.
6. Hold a knife by its handle.
7. Never grab for a falling knife.
8. Carry knives blade down, and store them blade-down with blades covered; storage in knife racks sheaths or blocks is best.
9. For storage in a utensil drawer, keep knives in a separate compartment to protect them and your fingers.
10. If you do get cut, treat it promptly and take steps to prevent fish poisoning.

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