

Safety Alert

Number: 22-12

Published: 10/11/2022

Subject: Hand Injury Incident

What Happened / Narrative

This Safety Alert / Lesson Learned has been submitted by one of our members to highlight a recent incident on one of their vessels, involving an accidental self-inflicted incision to a finger, sustained while replacing a knife into its sheath.

The IP had been preparing the vessel for port entry, and was splicing 12mm polypropylene rope, to put on the gangway as guidelines. He removed his gloves to splice the ropes, and once finished attempted to put his knife back into its sheath at his belt, still without gloves. He missed and severely lacerated his left index finger. See the sequence of photographs below.



The IP missed the sheath with the knife and pushed the knife into and down his left Index finger, causing a large deep incision, requiring surgery to correct possible tendon damage, and close the wound.

Our hands are our most used tool. Protecting your fingers and hands is important. Work-related hand injuries are one of the leading reasons seafarers end up in the emergency room and miss work. Damage to the nerves in your fingers and hands, loss of a finger, skin burns or allergic reaction, can negatively impact the quality of your work, your productivity – or worse – end your career and seriously detract from your quality of life.

The Injury (as seen on the left) resulted in the IP having to be paid off the vessel for surgical care, and onwards to leave for recovery.

Actions Taken / Reminders Issued

- All of the members vessels were requested to hold an Emergency Time Out For Safety to discuss this incident and to ensure that all crew members are aware of the dangers of knives onboard, and the correct procedures and protocols in their use, carriage, and stowage.
- Only use knives for their intended purpose,
- Never use “homemade” tools
- cut away from your body, keeping all fingers out of your cutting line
- Use all personal protective equipment required including gloves
- Cut on a stable surface
- Stay focused
- Do not rush, take plenty of time, care and pay attention to what you and your knife are doing

The information contained within this Safety Alert and the associated MSF web site is provided in good faith for the benefit of our members and does not constitute and is not intended to constitute professional advice or any form of formal representation on behalf of any MSF member or officer. The text as provided by submitting organisations may be amended to ensure that it is brief, informative and readable but will as far as reasonably practicable remain as per the intent of the original submission. For the avoidance of doubt, no liability whatsoever shall be attached to any guidance, recommendation or statement contained therein. Contents should be reviewed individually by recipients who will determine relevance to their own operations.