

Don't Run With Scissors!

February 2008 Safety Communiqué from the Technical Division Head



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The safety record of the Technical Division is excellent, thanks to the quality and dedication of the Division employees. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement to achieve the goal of zero injuries.

With these notes, I want to kick-off a new Technical Division Monthly Safety Communiqué. The title reflects its purpose: embed in each one of us an appreciation for safe working behaviors and a natural adoption of safety practices, just as it was embedded in us when we were young kids, that "running with scissors" is the wrong thing to do!

We plan to achieve this goal by recalling and discussing some recent accidents that happened either at FNAL or in other DOE laboratories, highlighting the mental processes and practices that could have prevented the accident. I'm convinced that every human being can learn from experience, and recalling some of the behaviors or situations that contributed to an injury will push every one of us to think properly before acting unsafely.

These considerations are even more important now, in this period of ongoing furloughs. It is just natural and human to be worried about the situation and be sidetracked, in our minds, by financial woes and thoughts of hardships to our loved ones. But making sure that each one of us can go home unharmed and safe and capable of supporting ourselves and the people close to our hearts is the best way to overcome the present hardship. It is therefore imperative to remain focused on safe working practices during this period.

I sincerely hope that this will help our thinking process and contribute to the creation of a safer working environment in the Technical Division.

INCIDENT BACKGROUND	HOW IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED
An electrician exhibited neck and shoulder pain after pulling damaged wires from conduit. The employee later suffered from weakness in his third and fourth fingers which has been attributed to nerve compression. He received treatment from a chiropractic physician, making this a reportable injury. It was learned later that the electrician was using a ladder too short for the job, which required him to work with his arms over his head.	A taller ladder would have allowed the electrician to work with his arms straight out in front of him, thus eliminating the strain on his neck and shoulder from working overhead. The time invested in searching for a taller ladder is negligible in comparison to the potential injuries.
An employee sustained a cryogenic burn on their right index finger while placing foam insulation around a cryostat. Liquid nitrogen had apparently leaked from the cryostat and came into contact with the employee's finger. The cryostat was warmed and the valve assembly bolts on the end cap re-tightened. No further leakage was noted thereafter. This was a first aid only incident.	The employee should have inspected the cryostat for visible signs of liquid before working on it.
A service subcontract employee slipped on ice and fell to their knees, twisting their ankle in the process. The employee was treated at a local emergency treatment center.	This incident occurred during daylight hours, and highlights the need to be aware of hazardous conditions during winter months, and the need to request actions such as salting to mitigate those hazardous conditions when noted.
An employee reached into a laminated pressed board cabinet to retrieve an item, scraping their finger on the edge of the door in the process. The employee went to Medical where they received first aid only treatment. It was later noted that the area of the cabinet was overcrowded and the doors were blocked from opening fully.	This incident could have been prevented by removing the item that was blocking the door and then opening the door fully rather than partially, thus providing better access.

Most safety experts believe that all accidents can be prevented. As you can see by the prevention column, a little extra care and attention on the part of the individuals might have avoided these accidents from occurring.