Don't Run With Scissors!

April 2008 Safety Communiqué from the Technical Division Head

By: Giorgio Apollinari, Technical Division Head

Injuries to Technical Division employees (and, in general, to any employee at the Lab) are of great concern to me on a personal and human level. In addition, DOE has set goals for all Labs to reduce injuries in the work place. DOE feels so strongly about the safety of employees that there has been at least one case of severe punitive damage for a Laboratory that failed to operate safely. We need to put our best efforts forward to prevent this from happening at Fermilab.

Unfortunately, the Technical Division has had two reportable injuries during this fiscal year. Both of these injuries were PREVENTABLE with a "common sense" approach to our daily work. Fermilab and the Technical Division are strongly committed to providing a safe working environment for our employees and visitors, but there is also an individual responsibility that rests upon the shoulders of every employee when it comes to their personal safety and the safety of their co-workers. We need every employee to practice awareness, look for known hazards on the job, and think how to best prevent possible injuries.

You should have received a copy of the new Technical Division Policy 4150 - Use of the Technical Division Technician (Tech) Shops. One of the most effective ways to practice safety within the Lab is to only use equipment for which you have received full training. This policy reinforces our standards on this matter. Please review the policy and become familiar with it. If you have questions about the implementation of the policy, contact Rich Ruthe or Romesh Sood. If you need another copy of the policy, please contact Marie Herman.

INCIDENT BACKGROUND	HOW IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED
An employee was attempting to pull out a piece of a hanging staple from a report. This staple was larger than the normal sized staples. A staple remover was first tried, but it would not grab due to the large size of the staple. The employee then used their fingers, and the staple became lodged between the nail and nail bed of their thumb, and could not be removed by the employee. The employee therefore reported to Medical, where a local anesthetic was applied to the finger, and the Fermilab physician surgically removed the staple. An antibiotic was prescribed, making this a reportable injury.	This injury could have been prevented by using the proper tool to remove the staple. If the staple could not be removed with the staple remover due to its large size, then another tool such as a small pair of pliers should have been used to remove the staple.
An employee was handling heavy aluminum supports, setting them in place, when the palm of their hand was pinched between a tripod and a steel beam.	This injury could have been prevented if the employee had been wearing the leather gloves that were available to them.
A visiting scientist, lifting cesium iodide crystals to be packaged for off-site transport, had sudden onset of lower back pain. The crystals were not particularly heavy, but the activity was repetitive over several hours.	A Hazard Analysis had been written for this activity and was followed. When this activity resumes in the future, the procedure could be changed so that the number of individuals performing the task is increased, so that no one individual is required to lift that many crystals.

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.