IMA-NA CASE STUDY #7
Heemskirk Canada Improves Safety Performance by Removing Open-Blade Knives from Facilities

• Heemskirk Canada works to provide a safe work environment for its workers, vendors, customers and all visitors to their facilities.

• As with many other IMA-NA member companies Heemskirk was having issues with hand injuries at its processing facilities. The IMA-NA Safety & Health Committee highlighted that hand and finger injuries are the most injured body parts in the industrial minerals industry.

• Heemskirk reviewed the IMA-NA safety videos with its employees and posted the IMA-NA safety poster on hand injury prevention. They also worked with their safety supply vendors to ensure that their employees had the proper protective gloves for work tasks. However, some employees continued to experience hand injuries from cuts.

• Heemskirk determined that open-blade knives and cutters were causing the injuries. Specifically, most of the hand injuries were caused when cutting polypropylene strapping on bundles of paper bags and removing shrink-wrap bags.

• Heemskirk was determined to find a safe alternative, and by working with vendors they determined that the Olfa S-10 Concealed Blade Knife was a good choice.

• Box cutter and open-bladed knives were removed from the facilities.
• Heemskirk employees reported that the new knives work very well for their applications and reduce cut bags when removing the strapping.

• There were no knife injuries in 2013 at their facilities!