

Knife Safety Bulletin

What is the risk?

Cuts and lacerations to hands, fingers and legs are common injuries for workers who frequently open boxes, plastic strapping and other packaging with exposed blades (such as non-retractable utility knives / Stanley knives, kitchen knives and scissors).

Injuries to hands and fingers occur when they are in the way of the blade or when the blade slips. Cuts to legs and other body parts can occur when the blade slips over the edge of the packaging and strikes the worker. Injuries are also sustained when not in the act of cutting, usually from accidental contact with a blade that has been left exposed or inattention from someone holding / passing a knife with an exposed blade.

How do we minimise the risk?

Use of Safety Knives

There are many types of knives available with recessed blades, which prevent fingers and other body parts from coming into contact with the blade itself. Examples are “parrot” safety knives or the “Klever Cutter” (both available at the links below from Winc). These types of knives can be used to cut shrink wrap, cardboard boxes, tape, bags, tags, strapping etc. They also have an ergonomic friendly design to maximise grip and prevent slipping.



Parrot Knife



Klever Cutter

It is recommended to use the above types of knives where practical, however another option is a [utility knife with an automatically retracting blade](#). These work by the blade automatically retracting into the handle when pressure or contact with the cutting surface is removed. This can reduce injuries caused by slipping off a surface, accidentally making contact with a colleague and from unexpectedly making contact with unused or unseen knives.

Safe use of Knives

Below are some tips when using knives to help reduce the risk of injury:

- Inspecting knives for broken blades, blunt blades and issues with the blade fully retracting. Always use a sharp blade as dull blades require more force (increasing the potential for injury).
- Keep the blade as short as possible and don't apply too much pressure on the blade.
- Hand a utility knife to a co-worker with the handle first.
- Keep your spare hand clear of the cutting area.
- Angle the knife away from the body. If you cut at an angle, your hand will move away from your body if it slips.
- Don't use utility knives for other purposes such as prying loose objects.
- Wear Personal Protective Equipment (cut resistant gloves and long sleeves) where appropriate.