

TOOLBOX TALK

Cut the material, not yourself! Utility knife safety

Utility knives, otherwise known as box knives, are a commonly used tool at home and in the workplace. If not used properly, these tools can inflict serious injuries.

Basic safety precautions

When using the knife, cut away from your body.

Keep your free hand, forearm and the rest of your body clear of the cutting path. Even though this seems like an obvious precaution, improper cutting is a common cause of most lacerations. Watch out for others in your work area so that they also stay out of the cutting path.



Make sure the blade is sharp. A dull blade means that the user must exert more force to cut the material, and this means that the user does not have complete control of the cut. Forcing the knife may also result in severe accidents that include ligament and tendon damage. The pressure needed to cut with a dull knife may also result in hand and arm fatigue, which can lead to an ergonomic injury.

Don't use the knife as a screwdriver or pry tool. Due to the brittle nature of the blade, this may result in the tip breaking off and becoming airborne. Knives with breakaway blades or X-Acto knives are not meant to be used in the workplace.

Clean the handle if it is oily or dirty so you have a good grip on the knife.

Check to see that the blade is properly seated in the knife.

Blades that are not correctly seated or are not the proper size will not completely retract into the handle when closed. This means the blade tip will be exposed, even when the knife is closed. Dispose of used blades in a puncture-proof, closable container.



As with all tool use, use the proper PPE. Cut-resistant gloves and eye protection are a must use!