OHBA Safety Pages: Utility Knife Safety

There's one hand tool that demands your respect over many others in the workplace, a tool that can cut you to the bone in an instant . . . the utility knife.
Many workers use utility knives, but one wrong move and they can do serious harm.
In fact, nearly 40 percent of all injuries attributed to manual workshop tools in the US involve knives with retractable blades.

Many accidents involving utility knives occur for the following reasons:

- Drawing the knife towards you instead of away from your body.
- Working with a dull blade. (They require more pressure, increasing the potential for injury.)
- Trying to cut more than the knife can handle.
- Improperly storing the knife with the blade extended.
- Failing to wear personal protective equipment.
- Neglecting to inspect the tool before use.



There have been cases where workers have suffered injuries from exposed blade tips. This is because the blades did not completely retract into the handle. That's why it's important for workers to use the proper size blades or replace defective retraction mechanisms. Some companies use self-retracting utility knives – the blade automatically retracts when not in use. The following are safety precautions to keep in mind when using utility knives:

- Wear safety glasses to protect your eyes in case a blade breaks.
- Always use a sharp blade. They are safer than a dull blade.
- Wear cut resistant gloves and sleeves (at least Level 3) to protect your hands and arms.
- Hand a utility knife to a co-worker with the handle first.
- Use one of the newer model self-retracting blade knives.
- If the application allows, use one of the new knives with a shielded knife surface.
- Consider using a rounded tip blade if the application allows for such.
- Ensure the blades are properly positioned in the handle before use.
- Keep extremities out of the cutting path.
- Don't apply too much pressure on the blade.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions when changing blades.
- Don't use utility knives to pry loose objects.
- Dispose of dull or broken blades in a puncture-resistant container.
- Use of disposable knives with breakaway blades is not meant for industrial use.

OHBA
OREGON HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

The information we provide is not intended to include all possible safety measures and controls. In addition, the safety information we provide does not relieve the Members of its own duties and obligations with regard to safety concerns, nor does Oregon Home Builders Association guarantee to the Members or others that the Member's property, job sites and/or operations are safe, healthful, or in compliance with applicable laws, regulations or standards. The Members remain responsible for their own operations, safety practices and procedures and should consult with legal counsel as they deem appropriate.

SAFETY PAGE MEETING GUIDE Topic: Utility Knife Safety

Employer: _____ Project: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Shift: _____

Number in crew: _____ Number attending: _____

Safety or Health issues discussed. Include recent accident investigations and hazards involving tools, equipment, the work environment, work practices and any Safety or Health recommendations:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Follow up on recommendations from last safety meeting:

_____

_____

Record of those attending:

Name: (please print)	Signature:	Company:
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
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10.		
11.		
12.		

Supervisor's remarks: _____

Supervisor: _____ _ _____

(Print) (Signature)