

# Look sharp: blade safety when opening packaging

## What is the problem?

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

## What are the risks?

Injuries to hands and fingers occur when they are in the way of the blade (either on top of or underneath the packaging), when the blade slips, or if an open blade is handled unexpectedly. Cuts to legs can occur when the blade slips over the edge of the packaging and strikes the worker.

## What is a solution to the problem?

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, which can be used to cut shrink wrap, bags, strapping, tape and cardboard boxes. Select ones that are comfortable for the majority of workers to grip and can be used with the wrist in a straight position. These knives can also be kept in pockets or clipped to belts, and their design reduces the risk of damage to the stock being unpacked.



Another option is utility knives 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, and from unexpectedly handling unused or unseen knives.

## Further information

More information is available from [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) or by calling the WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915.