

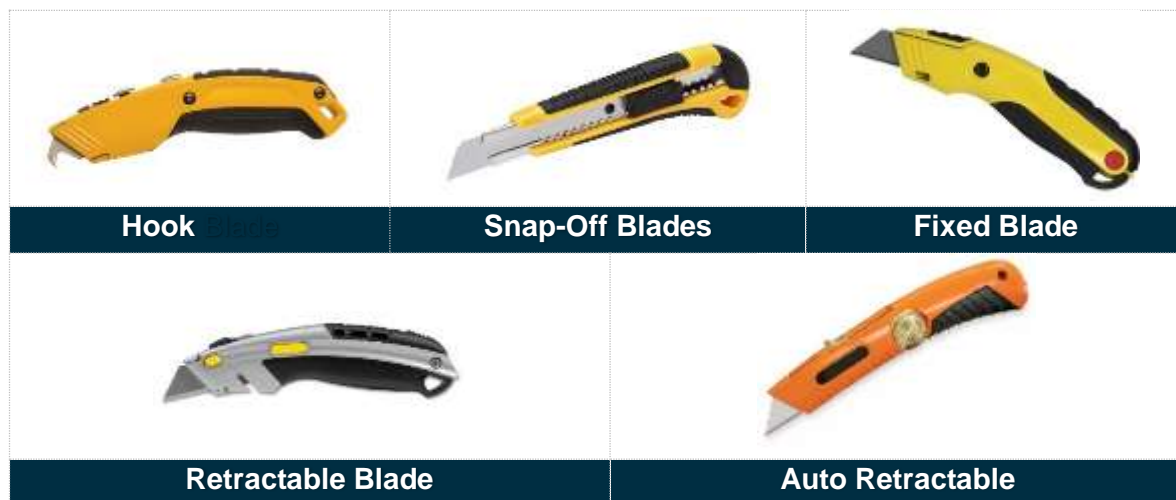
RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Utility Knife Safety

A utility knife, also referred to as a razor knife or box cutter, is a sharp tool used to open cartons, remove shrink wrap and a variety of other tasks in the workplace. Yet it doesn't come without a risk of cuts, lacerations, and more serious injuries that may require surgery and physical therapy.

There are two primary types of utility knives: a fixed blade and retractable blade knife.

1. **Fixed Blade** knives are designed so that the sharp edge is built into the handle and is always ready to cut. They come in multiple sizes and shapes for a variety of tasks with a straight, curved, or hooked blade.
2. **Retractable** blade utility knives are tools that expose the blade when extended or in use. There are a two primary types:
 - *Self-retracting*: requires you to keep a button pressed to extend the blade while using it
 - *Auto retracting*: the blade slides into position and stays extended as long as it stays in contact with the object it is cutting. At end of the cut it automatically retracts into the handle.



Utility knives are not an all-purpose tool. Since the blades are thin and hardened, they may break when used for something other than making a cut. Be sure to follow these techniques when using:

Safe Cutting Techniques

- Select the correct knife for the task, avoid using disposable/break-away utility knives for heavy duty jobs.
- Inspect the tool prior to using, ensuring the blade is intact and the tool is not damaged.
- Wear cut-resistant gloves that still allow you to firmly grip the knife.
- Keep body parts, obstructions/objects, and other persons out of the cutting path.
- Cut away from your body.
- Visualize the cutting path. Where will the knife go if the cut doesn't go as planned?
- Place material on a stable surface.
- Stand in a well-balanced position, avoid bending twisting or reaching while using the knife as your control of that knife is reduced.
- To stay balanced may require moving the material you are cutting or adjusting the position of your body.
- Place hands away from the cutting path.
- Do not get distracted, don't look away from your work.
- Make multiple passes rather than force a deep cut.
- Do not slash firm material (such as plastic) with the knife. Use a smooth controlled motion. A hook cutter can make this safer.

General Utility Knife Safety

- If a knife falls, do not try to stop it with your hand or foot.
- Do not toss a knife to someone. When handing a utility knife, it's best to set it down first.
- Do not modify a self-retractable knife.
- Keep blades sharp. It requires more pressure to cut, you're more likely to lose control of the knife.
- Replace the blade when it is dull or there are visible knicks, chips or cuts or adhesive material stuck to it.

A Safer Alternative

Over the past several years manufactures have focused on improving workplace knives and cutting tools, both ergonomically and addressing safety. The tool is designed to protect fingers and other exposed skin from the blade, thus reducing cut/laceration exposures. Below are a few examples to consider:



Replacing Blades:

Follow the manufacture's guidance when replacing blades. Some tools have snap-off blades. Use the blade's snapping tool. Never use your fingers or push down on a hard surface. The blade may fly up striking you in the face or eye.

To avoid loose blades around the workplace, provide employees with a rigid blade disposal container.

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This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.