



# SAFETY ALERT

## Campus Incident—Utility Knife Safety

RISK MANAGEMENT & SAFETY

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**Category:** Sharps  
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### Incident Description

Utility knives, also known as box cutters, are a useful but dangerous tool in the workplace. In the past year, three employees have suffered serious injuries (cut needing sutures) while using a utility knife. In each case, the employee was using a steel-blade knife and not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE).

### Lessons Learned

#### Many accidents involving utility knives occur for the following reasons:

- ◇ Drawing the knife towards you instead of away from your body.
- ◇ The knife not having an automatic retractable blade.
- ◇ Working with a dull blade. (Dull blades require more pressure, increasing the potential for injury).
- ◇ Trying to cut more than the knife can handle.
- ◇ Failing to wear personal protective equipment.
- ◇ Neglecting to inspect the tool before use.

### Tips for Safely Using Utility Knives

- ◇ Require knives with self-retracting blades.
- ◇ Replace steel blades with a hand-safe blade (**see picture**).
- ◇ Cut away from your body and keep your hands & fingers out of the path of the blade.
- ◇ Always use a sharp blade. They are safer than a dull blade.
- ◇ Wear cut resistant gloves to protect your hands.
- ◇ Always work on a stable surface
- ◇ Don't apply too much pressure on the blade.
- ◇ Follow manufacturer's instructions when changing blades.



All safety communications can be found at <https://riskmanagement.nd.edu/communication/>.

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