1. SAFE WORK PRACTICES - USING A RETRACTABLE KNIFE

The retractable knife has the potential to cause serious injury.

- Hands, feet, and head are most vulnerable to cuts
- Eyes
- Repetitive strain

1.1 Before commencing work check that:

- Consider whether the knife is the best tool for the job.
- Ensure the cutting blade is sharp; a blunt blade needs more force to cut and is more likely to slip.
- Ensure the handle is free from oil and dirt so a secure grip can be maintained on the knife.
- Check that the blade is properly seated and closes / retracts correctly.
- If inexperienced, use only under supervision, and always ask for advice if you are unsure about the best way to cut the material.

1.2 Wear appropriate PPE

Safety glasses, steel capped safety boots, gloves, long sleeves and trousers.

1.3 Using the Knife

- Clear the work area of all trips and hazards
- Always keep your hands free from the line of cut.
- When you are about to make a cut, reassess what the direction the knife may slip and ensure this area is clear.
- When cutting on a surface below you stand or kneel to one side of the line of cut
- Always use a pulling motion, such as from left to right in front of the user. A pulling motion is stronger and more controlled than pushing a knife away from you, making it less likely the knife will slip.
- If you are using a straight edge for a guide, preferably clamp it in position. If you need to hold it with your hand, ensure the hand is well clear of the cutting line.
- Don’t bend or apply side load to the blade. Blades are brittle and can snap easily.
- Have a firm grip on the knife and ensure your position is stable and well balanced.
- Do not force the blade through the material
- Do not try to cut too deep in any one cut, be patient, make several passes, cutting a little deeper with each pass.
- Take regular breaks

1.4 Preventing occupational overuse syndrome

- Take regular rest breaks
- Wear gloves
- Ensure the blade is sharp

1.5 Maintenance

Never operate a knife that is faulty, damaged, or not properly adjusted.

- Check the blade regularly
- Ensure that the blade is properly seated
- Ensure the handle is clean and easy to grip

Remember if you are unsure, ask for advice