

STEEL STRAPPING SAFETY

Steel strapping is a useful way to keep rolls of sheet metal from unwinding while it is being transported, and for binding or reinforcing wooden crates and other boxes that contain heavy objects. When these items reach their final destination, someone has to remove the steel banding. These metal straps can become dangerous weapons that will lash out when the bands are cut and the pressure is released. Keep the following things in mind:

1. Be sure to wear appropriate personal protective clothing and equipment. Safety glasses, a hard hat and safety shoes will help protect you if you are struck by the recoiling bands. Long pants and a long sleeved shirt will help protect your legs and arms from blows. Leather gloves can help protect your hands.
2. Make sure that other personnel are well clear of the area so they will not be struck by strapping when it is cut.
3. Duck-billed shears with long handles are usually the best tool for this job. Cuts should be made squarely to avoid forming sharp pointed ends. Don't use makeshift tools for this job, like a crowbar or claw hammer. Using the wrong tool can greatly increase your chance of injury.
4. Before cutting the straps, take a moment to decide the safest way to do it. If there are several straps, cut the one farthest away from you first. Stay out of the danger zone that is created when the strap springs back after it is cut.
5. Before you cut the strapping, also consider what may be inside the box before you open it. For example, some manufacturers of auto and mattress springs compress the springs in the shipping container and then band it to save space. Bales of cotton, burlap, and similar materials are also highly compressed before banding. Obviously, when these bands are cut, there could be a violent recoil action. Skill and special training are required before opening containers of this nature.
6. After cutting the straps, never leave them lying around for other employees to trip over. Pick them up and put them in a scrap container.

Cutting of steel strapping can be done safely if you remember to wear your protective equipment, keep others out of the danger zone, use the right cutting tool, stay out of the line of the strapping as it uncoils, and properly dispose of the used material. And don't forget to protect your hands with good gloves.