

Cutting, shearing and pecking

Cutting to length, trimming to size and holes for penetrations – metal roofing requires it all. But what is the best type of tool for the job?

One of the great advantages of metal roofing is the flexibility and usability of the base material. Corrugated and flat metal sheeting can be cut simply – provided you use the most appropriate tool for the job.

You could be pre-cutting before installation or need to create roof penetration points. You may have a mountain of material to get through before lunch or a single area to trim down. Whatever the situation, the right tool will make the job easier and cleaner, while the wrong tool can waste time and result in damage to the complete roofing structure.

There are a variety of tools in the market with distinct benefits for particular applications.

So what's on offer?

One for the toolbox

Cutting penetrations in metal roofs for pipe collars and skylights or registers in air-conditioning ducts can be very dangerous and time consuming.

Traditionally, tradespeople have used snips and nibblers to chase the profile only to find when they reach a bead or join the tool virtually gives up in the hand, as they have little in the way of leverage. Furthermore, the hand and forearm are also very exposed to the sharp edges of cut steel which can be a painful experience.

Recently a new tool came onto the Australian market that boasts handles of 400mm length that allow the users strength of arm movement to easily break through the bead or fold.



The long arm length of the Metal Pecker allows it to cut through a metal roofing bead or fold cleanly and simply, yet it is small enough to transport easily.

The Metal Pecker is the brainchild of Melbourne-based plumber and h-vac installer Mario Arena who developed the tool out of pure frustration.

The Metal Pecker's unique head design and impressive slot-shear cutting action is internationally patented and quickly earning a reputation as a high quality penetration/de-construction tool.

"The tool looks deceptively simple but there are some interesting aspects to the head that allow it to commence the cutting action and nip a clean piece of metal strip approximately 6mm wide by 42mm in length with each stroke of the blade," says Mario.

"You pick up the technique very

easily as it follows the profile and it will generally cut through whatever might be beneath the sheet such as insulation, wire or a host of other surprises. What's also good is that it doesn't leave any fine swarf to rust or jagged edges, as with cut-off blades or saws.

"The Metal Pecker is one of those handy tools you leave in the toolbox to help you out of a range of situations everyday." ■

Metal Pecker
www.metalpecker.com

Shear-style cutting

Although they were invented on opposite sides of the globe, the Swenson Shear and Metal Pecker hand tool share a lot in common.

Both require no electricity or battery power, are based on a simple guillotine principle and leave a straight, clean edge with no damage to the painted surface.

The Swenson Shear is at home on the ground, when profile sheets need to be pre-cut either straight or on an angle, while the Metal Pecker provides a new way to cut penetrations in roofs once the sheet is in place. They are both very efficient to use and greatly improve job safety.

The Swenson Shear has been around the US market for some 50 years and is the most popular way to cut sheet



The Swenson Shear is based on a simple guillotine principle to leave a clean, straight edge to cut metal with no damage to the painted surface.

profile of all shapes and sizes.

The USA roofing market differs from Australia's in that only a relatively small percentage of homes have metal roofs. Although it is becoming more popular in America, metal is not close to the almost 40% market share it has in Australia.

The industrial building sector, particularly in the mid-west and southern states of the USA, is where metal deck is king.

Over the years the Swenson Shear has been fine-tuned, now featuring a quick-change blade that can be easily swapped to accommodate different profiles.

The manual operation delivers accurate cuts and leaves a clean, burr-free edge.

Although the Swenson range is not currently available in Australia, we'll keep readers informed if it does head to our shores. ■

Swenson Shear
www.swensonshear.com

Doing the work for you

When it comes to large jobs, motorised cutting tools have an obvious benefit – the tool does the work for you. Although it can be easy to think that any motorised mechanism will be able to provide a clean and easy-to-use cut, there is a significant difference between tools when it comes to quality and performance.

John and David Gerber are the owners and operators of Excalibur Tools, a company that specialises in a range of quality cutting tools for the building and construction markets.

"We've built up a good collection of motorised cutting tools over the years," says David. "I think it's a case of



The motorised clipper tools from Excalibur Tools have the speed to easily and cleanly run through corrugated and sheet metal.

recognising that there are benefits and features in some tools over others that provide a much better end result.

"In simple terms, our product is a set of motorised clippers. For that reason alone, there are obvious advantages in that the machine is doing the work itself, so it reduces the chance of any RSI or carpal tunnel syndrome type injury."

Productivity has always been seen as the most obvious benefit of motorised metal cutting tools; however, a large number of tools on offer are actually attachments for a power drill, rather than specific motorised clippers. The common problem with these, says David, is that cordless power drills are generally not designed for speed – a key component to effective quality cutting – and therefore may not provide the desired result.

"Power is not a big issue; speed is," explains John.

"That is why the cordless area was neglected for many years, and why we believe we have some of the best tools to do the job.

"There are a number of attachments that people can buy which go on to the end of cordless drills, but many of them don't have the speed to cope. In principle, these units are meant to be the same as ours, but they are hampered by

very low speeds from the cordless drill.

"Many of the major cordless drill manufacturers have increased the power output in recent years, but the speeds haven't changed. Most drills produce around 1500-1600RPM compared to 2200+RPM for a specific motorised metal cutter – it is a significant difference."

Excalibur's Cordless Sheet Metal Cutter is particularly suited to corrugated profiles, which obviously makes it ideal for metal roofing materials. By using the speed of the clippers, the head nips through the metal for a clean and even finish.

"There is a sweet spot with good motorised clippers," says John. "If you angle the head slightly to the right and don't force the tool, you will feel a sweet spot and the head will run through the metal cleanly and easily. You can even rotate the head and lock it to a different angle so each worker can get a comfortable feel that suits them individually."

The full range of motorised clippers – as well as a host of other tools and demonstration videos – can be found on the Excalibur Tools website. ■

Excalibur Tools
www.excaliburtools.com.au