



Chris and Richard from Otago uni property services team with the Kappa 550 e-motion - quieter, smoother, safer.

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Staff safety paramount

University of Otago's Property Services Team chooses precision and safety with Format-4 Kappa 550 e-motion

The University of Otago Property Services is the silent powerhouse behind countless projects and maintenance jobs across its sprawling campus. With over 200 buildings, including the medical and dentistry schools they handle approximately 30,000 job requests each year, from custom joinery and cabinetry to creating specialised furniture for labs, flats and offices. For the team of three full-time joiners and two trade assistants, reliable, accurate machinery is essential to keep up with their diverse workload.

Two years ago the Property Services team decided it was time to replace their 20-year-old panel saw. "Accuracy and safety were top of the shopping list for a new panel saw," explains Chris, one of the team's senior joiners. After evaluating various options, they chose a Format-4 kappa 550 e-motion panel saw from Austrian manufacturer the Felder Group - a choice driven by the saw's precision and cutting-edge safety technology.

The standout safety feature of the kappa 550 is the Preventive Contact System (PCS). PCS is a groundbreaking technology designed to protect users by instantly retracting the saw blade below the table when detecting potential human contact. Unlike some other similar mechanisms, PCS uses an innovative electromagnetic response which drops the blade within milliseconds without causing any damage to it. "This PCS not only improves operator safety," Chris says, "but it also ensures minimal downtime as the saw can be reset and back in operation straight away."

Chris describes how the PCS has proven itself in practice: "We've actually triggered the PCS system on quite a few occasions," he says. "We make whiteboards for classrooms, which have a thin layer of aluminium. When the PCS system is active, it senses the metal and triggers the blade drop as a safety measure. So, we know it definitely works!"

We can temporarily turn off the PCS for that specific material, but it's reassuring to see just how responsive the system is."

Beyond safety, accuracy was another critical factor for the team. "It's nice to have reliable accuracy," says Richard, another joiner on the team. "No more tapping the rip fence back and forth to set it accurately. We just type in the required measurement, press the start button and the rip fence moves into position." This level of precision not only improves the quality of their work but also speeds up production, as there's less time spent adjusting and re-checking measurements.

The kappa 550 e-motion also comes equipped with a large, user-friendly screen and an X-Roll sliding table. "The large screen is really well laid out," Chris mentions, "and I love the X-Roll sliding table. It runs really smooth making it easier to handle larger and heavier panels with confidence."

Another unexpected benefit has been the quieter operation and improved dust extraction. "The kappa 550 is noticeably quieter than our old saw," says Chris. "And since we swapped saws, there's been far less dust in the workshop. It's made a big difference in our working environment."

For the University of Otago Property Services team, the Format-4 kappa 550 e-motion has proven to be a valuable upgrade. With its combination of precision, advanced safety technology and improved working conditions, it has become an essential tool in helping the team meet the demands of a busy campus.



*Felder machinery is sold and serviced in NZ by Jacks
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