Using cutting masks for individual files in a layout

Create CF2, EPS, or ACM cutting files with masks that automate the cutting out of each individual separation file on a plate layout.

The following cutting mask types are supported:

- **Default masks** apply a rectangular mask, based on the bounding box of individual files within a layout.
- **External masks** are files that are created in other software to define non-rectangular cutting contours.
- **Embedded masks** consist of cutting instructions added to LEN files by Esko PLATO software.

Create and apply an external mask

1. In the original artwork, create a closed vector object that meets the following criteria:
   - Matches the desired cutting contour
   - Is in register with the rest of the artwork
   - Is filled with a unique spot color
2. Output this vector shape as an additional TIFF separation that provides an outline for applying to the other separations as a custom cutting mask.
3. To apply the mask, select and right-click any Assigned or Unassigned File, and select **Apply external mask** with the desired crop margin.
   The vector contour separation is applied as a cutting mask to the selected file. In the display window, the applied vector mask appears as a black outline around the file. If you select the file in the display window, the outline changes to orange. When you output the layout, the cutting file that is created contains all the individual cutting masks.

Apply an embedded mask

1. In the layout, open the LEN file.
2. Right-click the file, and select **Apply embedded mask** with the desired crop margin.

Determine the status of a file's cutting mask

In the **Files** list, the following icons indicate the current status of mask data in each TIFF file:

Icon	Indicates...
	The file contains embedded mask data that is waiting to be applied as either a cut shape or a crop shape. **Note**: This icon appears after you open a LEN file with embedded mask data. The LEN file is automatically converted to a TIFF file.
	You applied the embedded mask data as a cut-and-crop mask.
	You derived the mask data from an external mask TIFF file and applied it as a cut-and-crop mask.

	You applied the mask data (external or embedded) as a cut mask and not as a crop mask.
None	No mask data is embedded.