

Demolition work - interior

Introduction:

Demolition work is often involved in preparing existing building space for construction.

Demolition could include removing a door to total reconstruction of the interior of a building. Sometimes the demo part of the job is seen as grunt work and involves little discussion beforehand, which can lead to unexpected injuries.

Fortunately, injuries that are common in this work can be prevented by doing better pre-task planning. Involving all workers in planning demolition work and discussing hazards and controls, better outcomes in quality, production and safety are likely.

Hazards to watch for:

- Live utilities
- Collapse
- Sharp edges
- Dust - silica, lead and asbestos
- Noise
- Fall hazards through openings
- Trip hazards
- Debris

Safe procedures:

- Have a qualified person survey the worksite before demo begins to identify hazards.
- Ensure all utilities are disconnected including electrical, gas, water, sewer and steam.
- Isolate the work area to reduce exposure to other workers and the public.

- Test for lead and asbestos as needed before beginning work.
- Have a pre-task meeting with the crew to develop a plan of action.
- Provide personal protective equipment as needed such as hearing protection, hardhats, gloves, respirators, eye protection and coveralls.
- When creating a floor opening for material disposal, be sure the size is no more than 25 percent of the floor's total square footage.
- Inspect equipment before use.
- Stretch before starting demo work to keep muscles flexible and ready for the physical requirements of the work.
- Plan removal of debris to ensure good house-keeping.

In conclusion:

Demolition work should be planned to reduce the potential for injury. Each project will have its own unique hazards.

A pre-demolition survey is needed to identify the full range of hazards and requirements of the project. Involving all workers in pre-task planning, hazard identification, determining work methods and reviewing equipment requirements will help ensure a job is on time, within budget and safe for the workers.

Are there other demolition hazards we should discuss or identify for our sites?