

Preventing injury during plasterboard handling

What you need to know as a busy builder

Want to reduce down-time due to manual handling injuries on your busy building site?

These are essential health and safety tips you should follow, even if you don't directly employ the people working on your site.

- Load out panels by machine and plan ahead to make sure the site is organised so they can be delivered close to where they need to be.
- Use panel trolleys or other mechanical aids to move boards around site. Keep them well maintained.
- Use plasterboard lifts or adjustable props to position boards safely for fixing. For low-level wall panels, use a foot-operated board lifter to avoid stooping.
- Where positioning aids cannot be used, for example in stairwells or tight spaces, use smaller size boards that are easier to handle.

Remember

Injuries from lifting and carrying do not occur because of a 'one-off' task. They result from repeated strain on the body from handling heavy or awkward loads with poor posture. If you suffer a significant manual handling injury you may be off work for several weeks and the affected area may be permanently weakened.

- Move away from 'piece-rate' pay systems. These encourage workers to rush and not to use lifting equipment, which increases the risk of injury.
- Create internal access openings such as 'letterbox' floor slots so large panels do not need to be carried through doorways or up stairs.
- Make sure workers are trained to use lifting equipment and handling aids safely.
- Purchase plasterboard panels from suppliers who mark their weight on the board itself.

See overleaf for examples of good practice...

Fee for Intervention

HSE now recovers the costs of time spent dealing with material breaches of health and safety law. This is known as Fee for Intervention (FFI). FFI generally applies when an inspector finds something wrong that they believe is serious enough for them to write to you about. A fee is charged for the time spent by the inspector in sorting it out. Following the simple guidance on this sheet may help you to avoid having to pay a fee.

Old lead paint

What you need to know as a busy builder

Do you know old leaded paint can be serious risk to your health? These are essential health and safety tips you should follow, even if you don't directly employ the people working on your site.

- Breathing or ingesting lead dust or fume can cause serious problems like kidney, nerve and brain damage or infertility.
- You are most at risk if you regularly do common jobs like:
 - remove existing paint coatings in properties built before the 1980s;
 - stripping old paint using blow lamps or gas torches;
 - dry sanding old paint.
- You can take simple steps to stop this dust and fume that will meet the law:
 - 1 Plan your work – Only strip back old paint if it is flaking, chipping or it is a risk to children.
 - 2 If paint is in poor condition remove using a combination of chemical paint stripper, wet abrasive paper and on-tool extraction.
 - 3 If paint is in good condition use waterproof abrasive paper to make a key for the new coat of paint.
 - 4 Remove any debris with a damp cloth.
 - 5 Place any debris, cloths, abrasive paper in a plastic bag for disposal.

Remember

- Lead pigments were widely used in paints for homes, schools and offices until the 1960s.
- Lead pigments were not removed from commonly used paints until the early 1980s.
- Lead paint can be found under existing paintwork in older buildings.



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Running a small construction site?

What you need to know as a busy builder

Want to run a successful construction site?

These are the essential health and safety top tips you should follow if you run a construction site, even if you don't directly employ the people working there.

- Keep your site clean and tidy, with clear space for people to work in.
- Keep people, including the public, away from danger – fence the site off and use signs to warn people.
- Make sure structures, such as walls, are kept safe, and demolition work is properly planned and workers know what to do.
- Use only 110 volt or battery-operated portable tools and safe electrical supplies.
- Make sure trenches and excavations don't collapse and ensure people cannot fall into them.
- Make sure workers cannot fall from height – working from ladders is allowed only as a last resort.
- Provide welfare facilities on site or close by – see the 'Welfare facilities' information sheet.
- Make sure the people on your site are trained to do the work safely.

This is just a summary – you can find out what else you need to know about health and safety by visiting www.hse.gov.uk/construction/index.htm

What can happen if health and safety is ignored?

A young worker with no training or instruction was left unsupervised to demolish a high wall known to be unsafe. The young worker was killed when the wall collapsed on him. The builder was convicted of manslaughter and sent to prison for three years.

See over for examples of good practice...