

Raising the Bar for Wall Raising Safety

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Raising a wall is a common task on a construction site. And it's a task that endangers the safety of several workers at one time.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Depending on the size, wood-framed walls can weigh anywhere from 550 pounds (248 kilograms) to 2,500 pounds (1,134 kilograms). If anything goes wrong during the process, workers can lose control of the wall and be caught under it when it collapses.

Example

At a home construction site, 15 carpenters were involved in the task of raising by hand a large wall that weighed approximately 2,300 pounds.

The carpenters spread out along the top plate of the wall and began to lift it. Once the wall got to waist height, it was placed on saw horses and braces were attached. Three carpenters dropped back to push up the wall using the braces, leaving only 12 remaining at the top plate, who became overwhelmed by the weight. Losing control of the load, they tried to? back down? the wall, but it quickly fell onto them. Some workers were able to step aside, but others weren't so lucky, including two who were pinned under the wall.

Fortunately, nobody died in this incident, but eight workers were sent to hospital with broken bones and serious strains and sprains.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

These best practices will help protect those who work on or near construction sites from the potential collapse of a wall being raised:

1. Know the plan. There should be a safe work procedure for this task. Be sure you understand each step of the lift and your role in the plan.

2. Know who has been designated to supervise all aspects of this lifting operation and who will be giving the instructions.
3. Check for yourself that there are no obstructions that might prevent the wall from being lifted safely.
4. Prior to the lift, a limited access zone should be established. This area should be restricted to entry only by employees actively involved in lifting the wall. Know where this limited access is and whether or not you are authorized to enter it. Note that this limited access will remain in place until the wall is adequately supported and braced.
5. The wall's weight must be estimated by a competent person, who will then determine the number of workers needed to carry out the job safely. If you are unsure of your ability to carry your share of the load, speak to your supervisor immediately.
6. If the wall is too heavy for manual lifting, mechanical wall jacks may be required. Speak up if you have not been properly trained in using this equipment prior to the operation.
7. Remember that large walls catch more wind than small ones. And small and light walls are more likely to kick out if inadequately secured.
8. Wear your fall protection as required.

FINAL WORD

Raising a wall is a team effort. Know your part in the operation and help prevent serious injuries.

QUIZ

1. What's a limited access zone?

2. How long does this limited access remain in place?

3. What should you do if you feel you are not able to hold your share of the load?

4. Before conducting the lift, what should everyone check for?

5. Small walls catch
 - o True
 - o False

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

It's your first day on the job and the supervisor's talking about the upcoming wall lift as if it were an everyday occurrence. But you've never been involved in one before. What should you do?

BEFORE THE TALK - TIPS

1. Prepare a plan for the job and hold a pre-lift meeting to discuss the safest method for raising the wall.
2. Framed walls have become much heavier due to contemporary construction designs. When estimating the wall's weight, consider the standard weight for all materials used in its construction.
3. Is fall protection required for this job? Be sure all your crew members know how to correctly inspect, don and doff the gear.
4. Will you be using manual or mechanical/electrical wall jacks to assist with lifting and placing the walls? If so, conduct a training review on the safe operation of these tools.
5. Outline the limited access zone and ensure that all crew members—including those not involved in the lift—know where this zone is, who's authorized to enter it.
6. If a manual lifting method is chosen, review safe lifting procedures with the workers conducting the lift.
7. Ensure that all workers understand how to prevent the wall from falling back and how to prevent overexertion.

AFTER THE TALK- CHECKLIST

PROVIDED FOLLOW-UP TO WORKERS THAT DID

POORLY ON THE QUIZ

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

OBSERVED WORKERS

TASK(S): _____

DATE:

REFRESHER TRAINING

TOPIC(S): _____

DATE:

OTHER (DESCRIBE):

MEETING DATE: _____

LOCATION: _____

NOTES

ANSWERS:

1. An area restricted to entry only by employees actively involved in the lift,
2. Until the wall is adequately supported and braced,
3. Tell your supervisor immediately,
4. That there are no obstructions,
5. False.

ATTENDANCE

INSTRUCTOR: _____ **DATE:** _____

SAFETY TALK: _____