

# OSHA FactSheet

## Demolition and Cleanup

Before starting a demolition, the person or persons in charge must adequately prepare for the task with regard to the health and safety of the workers. These preparatory operations involve the overall planning of the demolition job, including the methods to be used to bring the structure down, the equipment necessary to do the job, and the measures to be taken to perform the work safely. Before doing demolition work, inspect available personal protective equipment (PPE), and select, wear and use the PPE appropriate for the task.

Demolition work involves many of the same hazards associated with construction work. However, demolition also poses additional hazards due to unknown factors such as: deviations from the structure's original design, approved or unapproved modifications that altered the original design, materials hidden within structural members, and unknown strengths or weaknesses of damaged materials. To counter these unknowns, all personnel involved in a demolition project need to be fully aware of these types of hazards and the safety precautions available to control these hazards.

### Preliminary Tasks

A written engineering survey must be performed on each structure being considered for demolition to determine the condition of the framing, floors and walls, and to assess the possibility of an unplanned collapse of any portion of the structure. Brace or shore the walls and floors of structures which have been damaged and which employees must enter. Inspect and maintain all stairs, passageways and ladders. Properly illuminate all stairways.

Shut off or cap all electric, gas, water, steam, sewer and other service lines outside the building line. Notify appropriate utility companies. Temporarily relocate and protect any essential power, water, or other utilities.

Determine the types of hazardous chemicals, gases, explosives, and flammable materials which have been used in any pipes, tanks, or other equipment on the property. Test and purge the hazardous chemicals, gases, explosives, or flammable materials. Survey for asbestos or other hazardous materials.

Guard wall openings to a height of 42 inches. Cover and secure floor openings with materi-

al able to withstand the loads likely to be imposed. Debris dropped through holes in the floor without the use of chutes must be completely enclosed with barricades not less than 42 inches high and not less than 6 feet back from the projected edge of the opening above. Floor openings used for material disposal must not be more than 25% of the total floor area. Use enclosed chutes with gates on the discharge end to drop material to the ground. Design and construct chutes that will withstand the loads likely to be imposed without failing.

Post signs at each level of structures, warning of the hazard of falling materials. Protect entrances to multi-story structures with sidewalk sheds or canopies for a minimum of 8 feet. Canopies must be at least 2 feet wider than the structure entrance and be able to hold a load of 150 lbs./sq. ft. Storage of material and debris must not exceed the allowable floor load.

### Removing Walls and Masonry Sections

Demolition of exterior walls and floors must begin at the top of the structure and proceed downward. Masonry walls must not be permitted to fall on the floors of a building in

masses that would exceed the safe carrying capacities of the floors.

No wall section, one story in height or higher, shall be permitted to stand alone without lateral bracing, unless such a wall was originally designed and constructed to stand without such lateral support, and is safe enough to be self-supporting. All walls must be left in a stable condition at the end of each work shift. Employees shall not work on the top of a wall when weather conditions create a hazard.

Structural or load-supporting members on any floor must not be cut or removed until all stories above such a floor have been removed. In buildings of "skeleton-steel" construction, the steel framing may be left in place during the demolition of masonry. Walkways or ladders must be provided to enable workers to safely reach or leave any scaffold or wall. Walls, which serve as retaining walls to support earth or adjoining structures, must not be demolished until the supporting earth has been properly braced or until adjoining structures have been properly underpinned. Walls, which will serve as retaining walls against which debris will be piled, must not be used unless they are capable of supporting the imposed load. Dismantle steel construction column length by column length, and tier by tier.

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.

### **Mechanical Demolition**

No workers shall be permitted in any area when using a crane's headache ball or clam-shell to remove debris. Only those workers necessary to perform such operations must be permitted in this work area at any time. The weight of the demolition ball must not exceed 50 percent of the crane's rated load. The crane boom and loadline must be as short as possible. The ball must be attached to the loadline with a swivel-type connection to prevent twisting of the loadline, and it must be attached by positive means in such a manner that the weight cannot become accidentally disconnected.

When pulling over walls or portions thereof, all steel members affected must have previously been cut free. All roof cornices or other such ornamental stonework must be removed prior to pulling walls over. During demolition, continuing inspections by a competent person shall be made as the work progresses to detect hazards resulting from weakened or deteriorated floors, or walls, or loosened material. No employee shall be permitted to work where such hazards exist until they are corrected by shoring, bracing, or other effective means.

For more complete information:



U.S. Department of Labor

[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

(800) 321-OSHA

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