

Safe Drywall Delivery

Options for Prime Contractors

Delivery of drywall to many construction projects can be dangerous. For multi-level residential buildings such as townhouses and condominiums, access to the upper levels is often limited to interior stairways, requiring delivery workers to manually carry the drywall up multiple levels. If you are responsible for a building site, it is critical that you preplan the worksite to allow clear access and coordination for drywall delivery.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 4.33(1) states:

A work area must be arranged to allow the safe movement of people, equipment and materials.

With changes to the design of new homes, stairway drywall delivery is, in some cases, nearly impossible. Drywall can be up to 14 ft. (4.27 m) long; and depending on the thickness can weigh up to 240 lb (109 kg) per pair. Drywall delivery workers carrying out such continuous activity are exposed to a risk of a musculoskeletal injury (MSI) and/or falls from elevation. MSI* represents almost 50% of injuries to workers in the drywall delivery industry, with falls from elevation representing 10% of those injuries.

The Workers Compensation Act 118(2)(a) states:

The prime contractor of a multiple-employer workplace must

(a) ensure that the activities of employers, workers and other persons at the workplace relating to occupational health and safety are coordinated.

* Musculoskeletal injury (MSI) is the term used to describe soft tissue injuries that are commonly known as sprains or strains. For example, an ankle sprain is an MSI; so is a strained back. In construction, MSI often occurs in the lower back; but it can also occur in other parts of the body, such as the shoulders, wrist, or knees.

Prime contractors, subcontractors, and delivery companies should work together to determine the safest means of delivery.

Recommended safe delivery options

- Develop a company policy related to drywall delivery access.
- Preplan the project to provide clear access to all floors on the project for safe delivery of drywall.
- Clear ground access for telescoping boom forklift or boom truck, free of overhead hazards such as powerlines, and with solid compacted soil or properly shored concrete floor slabs.
- Coordinate drywall delivery times with the delivery company.
- Allow for several locations where drywall can be delivered.
- Provide available access openings large enough to safely accommodate passing the gypsum boards from the boom truck/forklift into the structure.
- Provide fall protection and/or anchor points on the structure at wall openings and balconies when transferring drywall from the boom truck/forklift into the structure.
- Install a window temporarily on the inside of the wall to allow for the window to be easily removed. If windows are not large enough or accessible for drywall delivery, an access hatch should be considered.

Recommended safe interior access options

- Proper weight distribution of drywall to ensure the floor is not overloaded.
- Sufficient access between framed walls inside the building, with plumbing and electrical wiring runs not impeding workers from carrying drywall between walls to adjacent rooms.
- Wall stud removal for movement of drywall through framed interior walls.
- Guardrails to accommodate drywall movement on stairways.
- Stairs leading down to basement are in place before drywall delivery.
- Designated areas on the floor where drywall can be lowered, if there is no access to the basement.
- Hallways and stairs clear of debris and equipment that may cause slipping and tripping hazards.



Other resources

- Drywall Delivery Safety Access Hatch:
http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health_and_safety_information/bulletins/constructive_ideas/assets/pdf/drywallsafety.pdf
- Arrangement of work area:
<http://regulation.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Part4.asp>
- Coordination at multiple-employer worksites:
<http://regulation.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/WorkersCompensationAct.asp#SectionNumber:Part3Division3>
- British Columbia Wall and Ceiling Association:
www.bcwca.org

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