

Trench blocks with handholds

Construction Occupational Health case study COH04

The problem

Large heavy trench blocks were used to build foundations.

The risks

The combination of block weight and poor posture when working in a restricted space exposed workers to manual handling risks and finger trapping.



Figure 1 Trenchblock with 'handholds' and 'tongue and groove' profile

The solution

Lighter trench blocks (weighing less than 20 kg) with handholds were used in place of the traditional heavier units.

The benefits

- The lighter blocks helped to reduce manual handling risks.
- The handholds made the blocks easier to lift and reduced the risk of finger trapping when lowered into position.
- The blocks had a tongue and groove system, which made them easier and quicker to install.
- Significant cost savings were made because the tongue and groove system improved productivity on site.

Notes

- The trench blocks were only suitable for straight runs.
- The handholds are only available in trench blocks, not other types of block.
- Other designs of foundation (eg mass concrete) would manage manual handling risks even more effectively.