

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.



Panels are difficult to grip. Carrying them causes poor posture and risks injury. Using panel grips enables good grip, better posture and is faster.



Stooping and twisting whilst moving panels cause huge strain on the body over time. A panel handling trolley allows better vision and one person can move several panels at once.



Fixing to ceilings is a common cause of strain for workers holding panels. Using a panel lifter allows one person to quickly fix panels with far better posture.

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The Working Well Together campaign aims to improve health and safety in the construction industry, particularly in small and micro businesses. For more information visit www.wwt.uk.com



This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.