

Keeping materials dry

Construction Occupational Health case study COH03

The problem

Workers found that wet weather made some materials difficult to use. For example, sand and block gained weight and some materials became slippery, which made it hard to maintain a firm grip. Production suffered.

The risks

Lifting heavier materials increased the risk of serious musculoskeletal injury.



Figure 1 Blocks covered by polythene sheeting to keep them dry

The solutions

The risks were avoided in three ways:

- Polythene sheets were used to cover blocks when they were delivered to site.
- Straw-filled matting and polyurethane foam were used to protect materials from the effects of frost and snow.
- A dry goods storage area was prepared to protect materials from bad weather.

The benefits

Protecting materials from bad weather can reduce the likelihood of manual handling injuries, which often cause prolonged absences from work. It also prevents damage to materials that might otherwise be spoilt.

Notes

- Workers are more likely to protect materials if they understand how it will help them.
- Where only some materials are used, make sure that the remaining store is re-covered.
- Move the goods storage area as construction progresses, allowing enough room for plant to access safely.