




Hazardous Manual Tasks - Safe Work Procedure - Construction

Commercial example: Handling plasterboard sheets

The Safe Work Procedure (SWP) example below refers specifically to hazardous manual tasks (HMTs) and does not refer to other hazards that might be associated with handling plasterboard such as, for example, traffic management, operating mobile plant or work at heights. The procedure below will therefore need to be added to the procedures for managing other hazards.

The information provided is specifically for the task of handling and fixing 29 kg x 3.6m x 1.2 m x 10 mm (6.8 kg/m²) plasterboard sheet to the ceiling.

The SWP you develop will vary depending on the site in which work is being carried out. This document aims to cover most possible scenarios that might be encountered. As a word document it is available to be customised to suit site needs. The use of photos specific to the site and task in the safe work procedure may also be of benefit.

| Hazards and risks? | Procedure (including control measures) | Guidance for developing the SWP |
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| <p>Hazard Manually handling 29.4 kg x 3.6m x 1.2 m x 10 mm (6.8 kg/m²) plasterboard sheet is a HMT.</p> <p>Risk There is a risk of musculoskeletal injury (refer to the HMT risk assessment and control tool).</p> | <p>Before work starts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the access ways are clear. • Identify the number of sheets required in work area. • Confirm the dimensions and weight of the sheets. • Check the location of storage for the sheets. Sheets are to be stored as close as is reasonably practicable to where the sheets are to be used.  <p><i>Caption: Storage of packs on gluts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get the electronic pallet jack. • Get the panel lifter for handling the sheets in the work area. | <p>Before work starts: <i>Both the builder and subcontractor should do a risk assessment and follow risk management principles.</i></p> <p><i>The builder's initial risk assessment should be done during the project planning stage. Actions the builder/principal contractor should take during the planning stage and prior to the procurement of the plastering services and material include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>identify HMTs. In this example, manually handling 3.6 x 1.2 m x 10 mm (6.8 kg/m²) plasterboard sheets, weighing 29.4 kg.</i> • <i>assess the risk from HMTs identified.</i> <p><i>In this example, the risk assessment identified a risk of MSD when manually handling plasterboard sheets and fixing the sheets to the ceiling. Mechanical aids have been included in the SWP to manage the risk of MSD. This includes the use of a powered mechanical aid to remove the packs from the loading dock and store the packs close to where they are to be used; and a powered sheet lifter for the fixing of sheets to walls and ceilings.</i></p> |

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| | <div data-bbox="465 209 943 392" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="409 427 723 453"><i>Caption: Powered panel lifter</i></p> <p data-bbox="409 491 589 517">Start procedure</p> <ul data-bbox="409 528 1379 855" style="list-style-type: none"> • Use (<i>insert name of mechanical aid to be used</i>) electronic pallet jack (EPJ) to move the sheets from the loading deck to the storage areas on each level (refer to SWMS for use of EPJ). • If it is not practicable to use an EPJ, use a sheet trolley to move the sheets to the work area. • Ensure the work area access is clear. • Check the SWL of the trolley (The trolley is able to carry a maximum of 20 sheets at one time). • Two workers pick sheet up from pack and place on trolley by sliding the sheet from the pack to the trolley. <div data-bbox="409 890 896 1123" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="409 1193 1339 1251">Note: for all team handling referred to in this SWP follow the team handling instructions below.</p> <ul data-bbox="409 1294 1366 1417" style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever team handling is used it is essential to match workers, coordinate and carefully plan the lift. You should ensure that: <ul data-bbox="479 1358 1366 1417" style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the number of workers in the team is in proportion to the weight of the load and the difficulty of the lift | <ul data-bbox="1406 217 2040 274" style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The builder should require the use of mechanical aids during the tendering process.</i> <p data-bbox="1406 316 2051 437"><i>Note: All mechanical aids should comply with proven engineering principles, relevant standards and be properly maintained to ensure they are without risks to the health and safety of any person so far as is reasonably practicable.</i></p> <p data-bbox="1406 480 2040 568"><i>The subcontractor should do a risk assessment once the contract has been signed and the materials and location of where work is to be done are known.</i></p> <p data-bbox="1406 611 2063 764"><i>The subcontractor will consult with the builder/PC about the subcontractor's completed risk assessment. In this example, the risk assessment included consultation with workers and may have drawn on knowledge from previous similar projects and the current project.</i></p> <p data-bbox="1406 807 2040 865"><i>In this example, a number of the sources of risk are outside the scope of the subcontractor to manage, for example:</i></p> <ul data-bbox="1406 876 2051 1094" style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>in a number of areas the internal access is restricted by lack of space and tight corners, thus limiting the use of powered mechanical aids or trolleys</i> • <i>there is poor communication and coordination of workflow on site resulting in congestion of trades and materials causing poor housekeeping and access when handling plasterboard.</i> <p data-bbox="1406 1137 2000 1195"><i>The builder should consult with relevant others and implement further controls to manage the risk, such as:</i></p> <ul data-bbox="1406 1206 2040 1359" style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>making crane or other plant available to ensure the materials are delivered to the level where the work is occurring</i> • <i>ensuring mechanical aids are used for all plasterboard and other sheet materials handled between levels</i> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ one person is appointed to plan and take charge of the operation ○ enough space is available for the handlers to manoeuvre as a group ○ team members are of similar height and capability, where possible ○ team members know their responsibilities during the lift ○ training in team lifting has been provided and the lift rehearsed ○ the team communicates throughout the procedure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Load the trolley with a maximum of 20 sheets. ● Secure the sheets in the trolley. ● Two workers use a trolley to take the sheets to next area where the plasterboard is to be fixed. ● One worker is at the front, in control of the trolley and the other worker is in the rear, ensuring that the sheets are not damaged as it is moved through tight areas. ● Two workers take the sheet off the trolley to the work area where the sheet is to be fixed. <p>If the sheets are to be stored prior to being used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● two workers take sheet off trolley to the area where the sheets are to be stored. ● the sheets are stored horizontally and raised off the ground using a maximum of two gluts (refer to SWP for storage using gluts). <p>If it is not practicable to use a trolley and the sheets are to be manually handled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ensure the work area access is clear ● two workers pick sheet up from pack and manually carry the sheets to the work area ● place the sheets in the designated work area as close as reasonably practicable to where the sheets are to be used ● the sheets are stored horizontally and raised off the ground using a maximum of two gluts (refer to SWP for storage using gluts). <p>Ceiling fixing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use the powered panel lifter (insert name of mechanical aid to be used) to move the sheet from the stack to placement on the wall or ceiling (refer to SWMS for use of nominated panel lifter). <p>If a powered panel lifter is unable to be used, use a pneumatic or manual sheet lifter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set up the sheet lifter. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>checking the loading dock size allows sufficient space for a mechanical aid, for example electronic pallet jack to be used</i> ● <i>getting the plasterboard materials delivered prior to the subcontractor putting up the frame</i> ● <i>providing sufficient space in work areas to allow for the use of assistive devices and/or mechanical aids</i> ● <i>storing and handling loads as close to point of use as practicable</i> ● <i>designating storage areas to ensure that walkways are kept clear</i> ● <i>ensuring the floor surface allows for use of mechanical aids, for example trolley or electronic pallet jack</i> ● <i>planning workflow to ensure there is no site congestion of materials or trades</i> ● <i>keeping access ways are clear</i> ● <i>ensuring mechanical aids (for example an electronic pallet jack and powered sheet lifter) are used so far as reasonably practical in commercial work</i> ● <i>training is provided in their use.</i> <p>Storage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Store sheets as close as is reasonably practicable to where the sheets are to be used. This is more easily achieved when the subcontractor ensures that the frames do not go up before the sheets are distributed to the work areas.</i> ● <i>When sheets are stored horizontally, consider if they can they be raised off the ground to reduce manual handling from ground level and to allow for increased use of mechanical aids for example with the use of gluts or dunnage. Ensure that a SWP has been developed for storage using gluts or dunnage.</i> <p>Labelling packs and single sheets</p> |

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- Move the sheet lifter to the work area where the plasterboard is to be fixed to the ceiling.
- Two workers pick up the sheet from stack and place it on the sheet lifter.
- Elevate the sheet lifter to the ceiling.
- One worker uses a suitable work platform to reach the ceiling (refer to SWMS for use of work platforms and SWMS for work at heights) uses a screw gun (refer to SWP for use of screw gun) to fix the sheet to fit sheets to ceiling.
- Rotate this task between the three workers with each new sheet being fixed.



Caption: Manual sheet lifter

Where it is not reasonably practicable to use a sheet lifter and the sheet is to be manually fixed to the ceiling, use three workers for a team lift.

- Ensure the access ways are clear.
- Set up work platform.
- Two workers pick up sheet from the stack.
- Carry sheet to work area.
- Rest the sheet against the work platform.
- Three workers access the work platform (refer to SWMS for use of work platforms and SWMS for work at heights).
- Three workers lift sheet up to the ceiling.
- Three workers remain on the work platform, with two workers holding the sheet in position.
- One worker uses a screw gun (refer to SWP for use of screw gun) to fix the sheet to fit sheets to ceiling.
- Rotate the task of using the screw gun between the three workers with each new sheet being fixed.

- Suppliers provide easily accessed information about the size, weight and the safe handling of the packs and single sheets.

Team lifting (where more than one worker is involved in the handling procedure)

- Team lifting should not be considered an adequate long-term control. Team lifting has inherent risks and alternative solutions should be considered through consultation with the builder and subcontractor and workers.

Hazardous manual tasks training

- Workers have had specific training for handling plasterboard sheets including:
 - manual task risk management, including the characteristics of hazardous manual tasks
 - specific manual task risks and the measures in place to control them
 - how to perform manual tasks safely, including the use of mechanical aids, tools, equipment and safe work procedures
 - how to report a problem or maintenance issues.

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| | <p><i>Note: Team lifting should not be considered an adequate long-term control. Team lifting has inherent risks and alternative solutions are currently being considered through consultation with the builder and subcontractor and workers.</i></p> | |
| Name of Worker(s) | | Worker signature(s) |
| | | |
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| | | |
| | | |
| Date SWP received by workers: | | |
| Date Information, training and instruction given to workers: | | |

This material has been adapted from the hazardous manual task safe work procedure, commercial example: Handling plasterboard sheets PN11623 – Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.

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