

Safety and health alert

14/99 Manual handling fastwall lintels

Incident

An experienced bricklayer sustained a severe strain to the muscles in his shoulder when lifting a fastwall lintel. He attempted to lift the lintel from the scaffold to the opening where it was to be placed without assistance. The opening was situated at 24 courses. While taking the initial weight of the lintel he felt his shoulder pop. This type of injury has the potential to have significant long-term effects on the bricklayer's ability to continue bricklaying.

Factors

The dimensions of the lintel:

- weight 41kg,
 - length 1.568m.
2. The overall manual handling involved in the placement of the lintel:
 - Lifting the lintel from the lay down area on the ground at the perimeter of the site (fastwall lintels are delivered on top of brick packs and have to be removed and laid on the ground as the bricks are used).
 - Carrying the lintel to the scaffold at a distance of approximately 20 metres.
 - Lifting the lintel onto the scaffold.
 - Lifting the lintel from the scaffold to the opening.
 - Accurately placing the lintel on the opening.
 3. Executing the lift after working for approximately 6 hours with no rest breaks taken.

Recommendations

1. The risk of sustaining a manual handling injury increases as the weight and/or size of the load increases. Given the dimensions of the lintel, 41kg and 1.568m long, one of the following is required to reduce the risk of injury:
 - Use of mechanical aids, such as a crane.
 - Use of team lifting. If team lifting is required, those involved in the lifting should be trained to safely coordinate and execute the lift.

A preferred option in the longer term would be to modify the design of the lintels such that the weight and/or size are reduced.

2. The current system of work results in the lintels being handled several times and over a distance. Additionally it results in lifts from ground level to shoulder height. A modified system of work should address:



- Reducing the amount of handling.
 - Eliminate/minimise the need for ground level lifts.
 - Eliminate/minimise the carrying distance.
3. The organisation of the work schedule resulted in a heavy lift just before lunch after approximately six hours of work. Careful planning needs to be done to ensure heavy manual handling tasks are completed at optimal times.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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