

Demo dangers

Demolition work is unpredictable – be ready for any hazard



Illustration by Don Lomax

The accident: A construction company was demolishing a two-story warehouse. A large portion of the building had already been razed when the second floor collapsed onto the first, trapping three workers. Emergency personnel worked to support the hole to keep it from collapsing further while attempting to rescue the workers. One worker was killed and two others were injured.

The bottom line: An investigation determined the floor fell because a worker cut through a first-floor support beam, causing the remainder of the structure to become unstable and collapse. Also, the company performing the work had been cited several times for violations, and had a fatal accident

on a different site two years earlier.

Demolition work is dangerous and unpredictable, and presents an opportunity for changing conditions even after your company's competent person has evaluated the site. Stay safe by following your company's demolition safety program, and also learning the potential hazards unique to each individual job.

1. **Check the survey** – Before demolishing any structure, your employer will have a comprehensive engineering survey performed, which will evaluate the condition of the entire structure and recommend measures necessary to prevent collapse. Familiarize yourself with all possible hazards revealed by the survey.

2. **Work from the top** – In this accident, a worker cut a structural beam that supported the floor above his fellow workers' heads. The demolition of floors and exterior walls should begin at the top of the structure and then proceed downward. Always remove the walls and floor from each story before starting on the floor below.

3. **Report changes** – With the evolving nature of demolition work, you may find yourself in a situation not outlined in the engineering survey. If you see unexpected or new jobsite conditions, report this information to your supervisor at once so the situation can be documented and evaluated for potential hazards to workers.

Information for this Safety Watch is from an accident report, the American National Standards Institute's A10.6-1983 - Safety Requirements For

Demolition Operations and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Standard 1926.850(a). It is meant for general information only.

Date of safety talk: _____ Leader: _____
 Attending: _____