Drywalling Safety Stats and Facts

FACTS

INJURY RISK FACTORS IN DRYWALL INSTALLATION INDUSTRY

1. **Repetitive Work** – Workers in the sheetrock industry consistently push, pull, slide, tug, reach, twist, and work in a static posture (a singular position). Each one of these positions and actions can place a significant strain on the worker's lower back and irritate the joints, tendons, and muscles.
2. **Awkward Body Posture** – Working in awkward positions involving bending, lifting, stretching, crouching, and leaning backward, can put significant pressure on muscles, tendons, ligaments, and joints that cause irreversible damage.
3. **Muscle Forcefulness** – The stress of completing the job tends to make workers perform duties beyond their capacity. The stress produced by a muscle forcefulness can affect every worker including those that are physically fit with strong muscles. The problem arises because the spine remains unprotected and susceptible to injury when the drywall worker lifts objects beyond the spine's limitations or capacity.
4. **Constant Muscle Effort** – Lifting and holding heavy objects in place until secured can cause significant injury and stress on the spine, muscles, joints, ligaments, and bones. Big, bulky, heavy materials carried in a vertical or horizontal position can cause significant fatigue to localized muscles or overall [whole body] exertion fatigue.
5. **Hand Tool Vibration** – Drywall installers and sanders are susceptible to whole body vibration injuries that can produce cumulative trauma (slowly over time) to the nerves and spinal column that could produce permanent (irreversible) damage.
6. **External Stress** – Workers are susceptible to substantial damage from external stress factors including working with sharp objects and dangerous tools.

STATS

- Common injury mechanisms were struck by/against, overexertion and falls. Drywall material was considered a contributing factor in 19.7% of injuries.
- One-third of these drywall material-related injuries resulted in paid lost time, compared to 19.4% of injuries from other sources.
- Rates of injury were particularly high among workers with 2 to 4 years in the union. Notable declines over time in rates of overexertion injury in which drywall material was a contributing factor were still observed after controlling for secular temporal trends. Experts highlighted changes over the past 20 years that improved both work safety and, in some cases, production. Declines in

drywall installers’ injury rates over time likely reflect, in part, enhanced workplace safety, including efforts to reduce overexertion hazards associated with handling drywall.

- NIOSH research found that the two main causes of injuries to drywall installers and carpenters are overexertion (37%) and falls (32%). These injuries frequently occur while workers are installing drywall sheets.