Raising the Bar for Wall Raising Safety



What’s At Stake

Raising a wall is a common task on a construction site. And it’s a task that endangers the safety of several workers at one time.

What’s The Danger

Depending on the size, wood-framed walls can weigh anywhere from 550 pounds (248 kilograms) to 2,500 pounds (1,134 kilograms). If anything goes wrong during the process, workers can lose control of the wall and be caught under it when it collapses.

Example

At a home construction site, 15 carpenters were involved in the task of raising by hand a large wall that weighed approximately 2,300 pounds.

The carpenters spread out along the top plate of the wall and began to lift it. Once the wall got to waist height, it was placed on saw horses and braces were attached. Three carpenters dropped back to push up the wall using the braces, leaving only 12 remaining at the top plate, who became overwhelmed by the weight. Losing control of the load, they tried to ?back down? the wall, but it quickly fell onto them. Some workers were able to step aside, but others weren’t so lucky, including two who were pinned under the wall.

Fortunately, nobody died in this incident, but eight workers were sent to hospital with broken bones and serious strains and sprains.

How to Protect Yourself

These best practices will help protect those who work on or near construction sites from the potential collapse of a wall being raised:

1. Know the plan. There should be a safe work procedure for this task. Be sure you understand each step of the lift and your role in the plan.
2. Know who has been designated to supervise all aspects of this lifting operation and who will be giving the instructions.
3. Check for yourself that there are no obstructions that might prevent the wall from being lifted safely.
4. Prior to the lift, a limited access zone should be established. This area should be restricted to entry only by employees actively involved in lifting the wall.

Know where this limited access is and whether or not you are authorized to enter it. Note that this limited access will remain in place until the wall is adequately supported and braced.

5. The wall’s weight must be estimated by a competent person, who will then determine the number of workers needed to carry out the job safely. If you are unsure of your ability to carry your share of the load, speak to your supervisor immediately.
6. If the wall is too heavy for manual lifting, mechanical wall jacks may be required. Speak up if you have not been properly trained in using this equipment prior to the operation.
7. Remember that large walls catch more wind than small ones. And small and light walls are more likely to kick out if inadequately secured.
8. Wear your fall protection as required.

Final Word

Raising a wall is a team effort. Know your part in the operation and help prevent serious injuries.