

Bricklaying checklist for builders and building trades contractors

June 2017

1. Have you set aside enough space for deliveries of bricks?

Wherever space allows, have the pallets of bricks stored inside the site boundaries, making sure they do not block safe access and emergency exits. Locate pallets so the bricklayers' labourers can safely pick up the bricks below their shoulder height and safely move the bricks to where they are needed.

If you are forced to store bricks on nature strips or other public space, make sure you comply with municipal Council requirements and properly barricade them to safeguard the public. Never block off footpaths in a way which forces people onto an unbarricaded public roadway.

2. Are cement mixers being used safely?

Mixers should be well maintained and serviceable. Make sure they are fitted with proper guards around the pulley belts. Electrically powered mixers should have leads in good condition and should be protected by a residual current device (earth leakage).

Petrol driven mixers should be properly tuned and should never be used inside buildings unless there is very good natural ventilation to prevent deadly build up of carbon monoxide fumes. They should also not be used in cellars and basements.

The loading and unloading of mixers to and from utes and trailers should be a twoperson operation done with mechanical aids or ramps long enough to prevent overstraining.

Reduce the risk of workers' overstraining by ordering cement in 20 kg bags, rather than 40 kg bags.

3. Have the bricklayers' scaffolds been properly constructed?

Scaffolds for bricklaying need to be built for heavy duty loads (up to 675 kg per platform per bay). They must be on firm foundations and built level and plumb. They need to be properly braced and rigidly tied to the building. They need proper temporary stairways or ladder access.

Platforms should be at least 5 planks wide and fully decked with genuine scaffold planks in sound condition. All platforms over 2 metres need guardrails, midrails and toeboards. Brickguards are preferable.

Trestle scaffolds should be heavy duty, fully planked, set up on firm horizontal surfaces and never used where a person or brick could fall more than 2 metres. Adjustable trestles need hardened steel locking pins not pieces of scrap reinforcing rod because a sudden impact on the trestle can shear them (just like bolt cutters can). Never "piggyback" trestles to gain extra height use the proper type of scaffold instead.

Keep the scaffolds at least 4.6 metres away from live powerlines. If the potential fall height from the scaffold is more than 4 metres, it must be erected, altered and dismantled by a person with a WorkSafe certificate of competency appropriate to the type of scaffold.

Modular scaffolds should incorporate 2plank platform brackets where practicable so that bricklayers can work from "split lifts" and lay the bricks above knee height and below shoulder height. Where platform brackets are set up between lifts and the fall distance from them is more than 2 metres, the lift immediately below the brackets should also be fully decked as a catch platform for falling debris, with an inside toeboard in addition to the outside guardrail, midrail and toeboard.

4. Are the bricklayers using the scaffold safely?

Overloaded platforms can cause the scaffold to collapse. Heavy duty working platforms can be safely loaded up to 675 kg per bay. Typically, on one working platform bay, this might be something like allowance for up to two workers at any one time (160 kg), up to 100 bricks (around 400 kg), a drum of water (around 10 kg), a board of mortar (up to 80 kg) and some hand tools (around 5 kg).

Clear access needs to be maintained along the full platform length. Broken bricks and debris should be regularly cleaned up from the platform and safely deposited off the scaffold.

Bricklayers should not lay bricks above shoulder height because this greatly increases the risk of manual handling injuries. Get a new lift of scaffold put in at the right height so they don't have to overreach.

5. Are barrow hoists properly set up and used safely?

The person erecting and dismantling a barrow hoist must have a WorkSafe scaffolding or rigging certificate of competency, and the person who operates the hoist must have a WorkSafe hoist operation certificate of competency.

The hoist must be stable and vertical. It should be independently tied to the building not just tied to the scaffold because if it overturns, it will pull the scaffold down with it. The hoist operator needs overhead protection. Use interlocked gates at scaffold platform landings. Make sure the hoist is well maintained and regularly inspected. Electrically powered hoists need residual current devices (earth leakage).

Wheelbarrows should be placed on the hoist platform with the handles pointing towards the scaffold so the labourer can pick up the barrow without needing to step on to the elevated platform. Never allow or tolerate anyone riding on the platform barrow hoists are not designed safely enough to support people.

No certificate is required to set up or operate a brick elevator. Elevators must be set up to remain stable and should be barricaded to protect workers from the possibility of falling bricks.

6. Is brick cleaning being done safely?

Brick cleaning involves the use of hydrochloric acid and water. Make sure hydrochloric acid containers are safely and securely stored when not in use. Make sure the workers understand the dangers of acid burns and know how to use acids safely. Make sure they are fully protected from acid splashes to the eyes and skin.

7. Are bricklayers protected from UV rays?

Most bricklaying is outside work, so the bricklayers are at risk from prolonged exposure to ultraviolet light from the sun. They need long trousers and long sleeve shirts, broad brimmed hats and 15 plus sunscreen. If they refuse to wear the right protection, get bricklayers who will.

Further information

Contact WorkSafe Victoria Advisory Service on **1800 136 089** or go to **worksafe.vic.gov.au**.

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017*
- *Hazardous Manual Handling Compliance Code*
- *A Guide to Hoist Operation*
- Australian Standard AS/NZS 4576, Guidelines for Scaffolding

Note: *This guidance material has been prepared using the best information available to WorkSafe, and should be used for general use only. Any information about legislative obligations or responsibilities included in this material is only applicable to the circumstances described in the material. You should always check the legislation referred to in this material and make your own judgement about what action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with the law. Accordingly, WorkSafe cannot be held responsible and extends no warranties as to the suitability of the information for your specific circumstances; or actions taken by third parties as a result of information contained in the guidance material.*

This guidance has been reviewed and updated for the sole purpose of amending year and regulation references relating to the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, in line with amendments which came into effect on 18 June 2017.