

TOOLBOX TALK: DEMOLITION

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Before anything else: has anybody here seen the engineering survey for this building? Not been told about it. Seen it. It has to exist in writing before a single wall comes down.

The talk

The first requirement comes before demolition starts. An engineering survey shall be made by a competent person of the structure, to determine the condition of the framing, floors and walls and the possibility of unplanned collapse of any portion of it. Any adjacent structure where employees may be exposed gets checked the same way.

And the employer shall have in writing evidence that such a survey has been performed. In writing. That line is the difference between a survey and somebody having had a look, and it is the first thing an inspector asks for after an incident.

If the building has been damaged by fire, flood, explosion or anything else, and people have to work inside it, the walls or floor shall be shored or braced. A damaged structure is not the same job as a sound one and it does not get the same plan.

Every service line goes off before work starts: electric, gas, water, steam, sewer and anything else, shut off, capped or otherwise controlled outside the building line, and the utility company gets told in advance in each case. Anything that must stay live gets temporarily relocated as necessary and protected.

Then the part that kills people who did everything else right. It has to be determined whether hazardous chemicals, gases, explosives or flammable materials have been used in any pipes, tanks or equipment on the property, and where that is apparent or suspected, testing and purging happen and the hazard is eliminated before demolition starts. A cutting torch into an old tank is a complete story with one ending.

Openings are the day to day risk. Where anybody could fall through a wall opening it gets protected to a height of about 42 inches. Floor openings not used as material drops get covered with material strong enough to carry any load that could land on it, secured so it cannot shift.

Where debris is dropped through a hole without a chute, the area below is completely enclosed with barricades at least 42 inches high and at least 6 feet back from the projected edge of the opening above, with warning signs posted at every level. Nobody works in that lower area until the dropping stops upstairs.

And glass. Where a hazard exists from fragmentation of glass, that hazard shall be removed. Not taped, not avoided. Removed, before the machine gets near it.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The written engineering survey. Ask where it is and who the competent person was.
- Every utility, and how anybody here knows it is actually dead rather than switched off somewhere.
- Any tank, drum or pipe on site that nobody can say what was in it.
- Every floor opening, and whether its cover would hold a loaded barrow.
- The drop zone below any material hole: barricades, distance, signs.
- Any glazing still in a wall that is coming down today.

The rules that apply

- Prior to permitting employees to start demolition operations, an engineering survey shall be made by a competent person of the structure to determine the condition of the framing, floors and walls and the possibility of unplanned collapse, and of any adjacent structure where employees may be exposed. The employer shall have written evidence that the survey was performed.
- Where employees must work inside a structure damaged by fire, flood, explosion or other cause, the walls or floor shall be shored or braced.
- All electric, gas, water, steam, sewer and other service lines shall be shut off, capped or otherwise controlled outside the building line before demolition starts, with the utility company notified in advance.
- Where hazardous chemicals, gases, explosives or flammable materials are apparent or suspected in pipes, tanks or equipment, testing and purging shall be performed and the hazard eliminated before demolition starts.
- Wall openings through which employees could fall shall be protected to a height of approximately 42 inches, and floor openings not used as material drops shall be covered with material substantial enough to support any imposed load and secured against movement.
- Where debris is dropped through holes without chutes, the area below shall be completely enclosed with barricades at least 42 inches high and at least 6 feet back from the projected edge of the opening, with warning signs at each level, and no removal below until debris handling above has stopped.

Ask the crew

- Who did the engineering survey on this building, and where is the written evidence of it?
- Which utilities are confirmed dead, and confirmed by whom?
- Where is the drop zone, and who is allowed in it while material is coming down?

Close with this

Everything on this job is designed to fall down. The only question is whether it does it on the day somebody chose.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

	Print name and signature
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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.