

Working Safely with Concrete

Working with concrete is tough. Whether it is a vertical or flat pour, whether it's delivered or mixed, this job places serious demands on the human body. Daily tasks can involve bending, lifting, and kneeling. Here are some steps to take when working with concrete.

Protect your back!

- Cement bags weigh 94 pounds use caution when lifting. Get help!
- Bend your legs, squat and hold the sack as close to your body as possible.
- Do not twist the waist, move your feet to turn when carrying bags.
- Work together to lift heavier items.
- Use good body positioning when using hand tools.

Avoid or limit bodily contact with fresh concrete. Concrete contains Portland, a chemical that strips the skin's moisture creating an irritation or burning effect.

- In case of contact, immediately wash affected areas with fresh water.
- Remove concrete saturated clothing as soon as possible.
- Wear goggles and/or other face and eye protection devices.
- Wear clean clothing each day.
- Wear waterproof gloves
- Wear boots high enough to prevent fresh concrete from spilling inside.
- Wear waterproof knee pads and/or protective pants

Other things to avoid.

- Remove tools and materials from the walking path.
- Remove or bend nails on forming material.
- Make sure that the concrete chute is in a locked position prior starting the pour.
- Stay in the concrete truck driver's line of sight while parking the vehicle.
- Make sure to maintain 3 points of contact if climbing the access ladder
- Keep hands clear if connecting chute sections.

Cured or dry powder concrete also creates hazards. Concrete and any material containing soil contains a substance called silica. Silica is found in dusts from dry soil, sand, opening concrete bags or when cutting concrete. Over time, inhaled silica causes respiratory, kidney and liver disorders.

Wear Personal Protective Equipment, respiratory protection, while cutting or hammering cured concrete or when opening cement bags. Use water when cutting concrete. Water suppresses the dust and prevents silica exposure. Various saws (hand held chop saws, walk behind cut saws, grinders) come equipped with water or vacuum attachments.