

# Demolition Planning

Sometimes we must demolish before we build. It may be a multi-story building or just a wall in a house. Regardless of the size of the job, demolition is a dangerous activity for a variety of reasons: How strong are the floors and walls? Are there hazardous chemicals, asbestos, or lead present? Are there utilities in the wall or structure? Have they been completely disconnected and/or capped? Is the structure stable? How long will it be stable? Are there insects or animals in the building, and are their droppings dangerous?

You can't start demolition work until all hazards are identified and controlled. On a bigger job, a competent person will do an engineering survey to determine the condition of the structure and the risk of premature collapse. On a smaller job, you may be responsible for identifying the hazards. If there are Job Safety Analyses (JSAs) or pre-task plans available, make sure that you review them.

Both old and new buildings can contain several harmful materials that can expose you to serious health hazards and can pollute the environment if they are not handled or disposed of properly. Hazardous materials can include silica, asbestos, PCBs, lead, mold, and animal droppings. Find out what hazardous materials are present and how to protect yourself from exposure. Review any relevant SDSs. Dispose of or recycle the materials properly and safely.

Be sure you know what types of PPE are required for the job including eye and face protection, hearing protection, respirators, and fall protection. Always wear your hard hat to prevent injuries from falling objects and flying debris. Wear proper work boots and have gloves handy. Inspect personal protective equipment carefully before you put it on and before entering the structure.

## **Before you start demolishing anything:**

- Before starting, be sure to brace or shore walls or floors that need support.
- Prevent falls by making sure that openings and holes are covered, and that edges are protected.
- Make certain that all utility services are located and shut off, locked out, or capped.
- Know what insects, rodents, and animals you might come across.
- Know how to call the paramedics and know the location of the nearest clinic.
- Determine what form of communication you will use to coordinate demolition.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy at all times.

