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Date Issued: September 27, 2007

INCIDENT ALERT

A laborer had been tasked with demolishing a masonry wall. The wall had been constructed with glazed ceramic blocks. The work technique was to strike the wall with a hammer to dislodge the blocks then remove the dislodged section. The worker had removed one section of block when he noticed some ceramic debris lodged between two old metal ventilation ducts that were installed behind the wall. He reached in to retrieve the debris and his forearm struck one fragmented block, resulting in a laceration. He reported the injury to his supervisor who transported him to a nearby medical facility where he received stitches and was released to return to work.

LESSONS LEARNED

Glazed ceramic block presents material specific hazards that were not taken into account when the job hazard analysis was developed. The glazing, when broken, can be as sharp as broken glass. The hazard analysis that had been developed addressed general demolition activities but did not discuss the personal protective equipment, work practices, or engineering controls that may have been necessary when working with these types of sharp materials. Engaging the workers in task specific planning could have benefitted the organization by drawing upon their expertise and observations. A good task specific planning effort, focused on the unique aspects of this task, may have helped prevent the injury.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Talk with your contractor about how they manage demolition and their expectations for their contractors to address sharp objects that may be encountered. Talk with them about crew based task planning efforts and ask how they emphasize the need to inspect the work area for hazards during the plan development.

2. Watch for activities that may result in similar injuries during your walkthrough. Are workers aware of the hazards present in their work area? Have they taken steps to protect themselves and eliminate hazards? Have the workers planned their task and taken into account the changing conditions that are an integral part of demolition and construction?

3. Share this Incident Alert with your contractor and ask them to share it with their workers.

Distribution:
All CPO Staff