The work performed by blocklayers is physically demanding due to the weight of materials handled, the use of their hands to install, position, move and manipulate materials and equipment, and their working conditions.

Laying block creates risks for shoulder and low back pain and injuries due to:
  • block weight
  • frequency of lifting materials and twisting
  • height of work and materials; and
  • distance of work from workers

One of the two methods the Center for Construction Research and Training recommends for reducing the injuries is to use open ended concrete masonry units.
  • An open ended concrete masonry unit (CMU) allows bricklayers to place CMU block around rebar, pipes and other vertical obstructions.
  • It eliminates the need to lift the CMU above shoulder level reducing the risk for back and shoulder injuries.
  • Contractors who use them particularly when there is frequent vertical rebar, noted an increase in productivity.

The other method recommended for reduction of injuries was the use of very light concrete masonry units. The Center for Construction Research and Training gave an example of a block which weighed about 30 pounds. The ProBlock has both 8 and 12 inch units that weigh well below the 30 pounds recommended.

To increase the use of ergonomic solutions, the industry must inform and involve the key players:
  • Designers, structural engineers and architects who influence the building materials specified;
  • Masonry contractors who make the equipment decisions, and can influence the choice of materials used
  • Workers who play an active role in deciding how best to implement a new material, piece of equipment or work practice.