

The absolutely essential health and safety toolkit for the smaller construction contractor





Turning concern into action

This toolkit provides a ready checklist for health and safety problems on small construction sites. It will help you to manage or avoid them and to ensure your own health and safety as well as the health and safety of the people who work for you, your clients, and others such as the public. The toolkit also acts as a signpost to more detailed advice – and for detailed advice on health in the construction industry contact www.buildhealthni.com. [Buildhealth is an industry led initiative to improve the health of workplaces in the construction industry].

If we all work together we can make the construction industry a healthier and safer place to work in.

Managing

When managing your business, do you:

- give enough time to planning, organising and controlling your work?
- check what actually happens and stop dangerous practices?
- have someone to turn to if you need health and safety advice? (**HSENI's Information and Advice Helpline** – telephone **0800 0320 121** – is there to help);
- take pride in your standards?
- think about health as well as safety risks – it may help you to think of them as 'slow-acting' accidents.

For more information, see:

- 1 HSENI's website at www.hseni.gov.uk or HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk/construction
- 2 Construction occupational health management essentials (COHME) website at www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks
- 3 Buildhealth www.buildhealthni.com

Reporting accidents

If someone you employ, or who is working on your site, has an accident or work-related illness, make sure that you:

- Notify the Incident Contact Centre (see below) immediately if the accident is fatal or involves a major injury, such as a fracture, amputation or loss of sight.
- Report any work-related accident which results in more than three days off work.
- Report a case of occupational ill health when you receive a report of a diagnosed work-related illness.
- If a member of the public is killed or sent to hospital as a result of an accident on your site, then you should notify that too.

You can notify the Contact Centre:

- Online at www.hseni.gov.uk
- In writing, using the form in the RIDDOR (NI) 97 booklet, and then either faxing it on (028) 9023 5383, or posting it to: **HSENI, 83 Ladas Drive, Belfast BT6 9FR**
Blank forms are also available on HSENI's website at www.hseni.gov.uk
- By telephone on **(028) 9024 3249**

For more information, see free leaflets:

1. *RIDDOR (NI) 97 HSENI 11 08*

Employing

When you employ or control people doing work for you, do you make sure that:

- they are trained, competent and fit to do the job safely and without putting their own or others' health and safety at risk?
- they are properly supervised and given clear instructions?
- they have access to washing and toilet facilities?
- they have the right tools, equipment, plant and protective clothing?
- you talk about health and safety issues with them (or their representatives)?
- you have made arrangements for employees' health surveillance where required?

Note: *If a person working under your control and direction is treated as self-employed for tax and national insurance purposes, they may nevertheless be your employee for health and safety purposes. Whether they are employed or self-employed, you need to take action to protect people under your control.*

For more information, contact:

Training organisations (eg the Construction Industry Training Board) or
HSENI Information and Advice Helpline on **0800 0320 121**

Subcontracting

When you subcontract work to others, do you:

- check the health and safety performance of the people you plan to use?
- give them the health and safety information they need for the work?
- talk about the work with them before they start?
- make sure that you have provided everything you agreed (eg safe scaffolds, the right plant, access to welfare, etc)?
- check their performance and remedy shortcomings?
- Provide a copy of any demolition / refurbishment survey



Site health and safety checklist

The following pages provide you with an essential checklist of some of the hazards most commonly found on construction sites. The questions will help you decide whether your site is a safe and healthy place to work.

This is not a full list.

Can everyone get to their place of work safely – and work there safely?



'...are holes protected with clearly marked and fixed covers to prevent falls?'

Access on site

- Are access routes in good condition and clearly signposted?
- Are edges which people could fall from provided with double guard rails or other suitable edge protection?
- Are holes protected with clearly marked and fixed covers to prevent falls?

A steel fixer was killed when he fell through an unsupported decking sheet. A number of decking sheets had been used as temporary covering for the lift core of an existing building.

- Is the site tidy, and are materials stored safely?
- Is lighting good enough?



'...are there wash basins, hot and cold (or warm) running water, soap and towels?'

Welfare

- Are toilets readily available and are they kept clean and properly lit?
- Are there washbasins, hot and cold (or warm) running water, soap and towels?
- Are the washbasins large enough to wash up to the elbow and are they kept clean?
- Is there somewhere to change, dry and store clothing?
- Are drinking water and cups provided?
- Is there a place where workers can sit, make hot drinks and prepare food?
- Can everyone who needs to use them get to the welfare facilities easily and safely?
- Are welfare facilities kept warm and well ventilated?

For more information, see free HSE leaflets:

- 1 *Provision of welfare facilities at fixed construction sites* CIS18 (rev 1)
- 2 *Provision of welfare facilities at transient construction sites* CIS46
- 3 *Welfare facilities - what you need to know as a busy builder* CIS62



'...will the weather conditions threaten the health and safety of those carrying out the work?'

Working at height

- Have you planned the work properly and identified suitable precautions to make sure work can be carried out safely?
- Have you thought about whether you can avoid working at height by using different equipment or a different work method?
- Can you use equipment that will prevent a fall from happening, such as scaffolding or a mobile elevating work platform?
- Can you put in place measures to reduce the distance and consequences of a fall should one happen, such as nets, soft landing systems or safety decks?
- Will the weather conditions threaten the health and safety of those carrying out the work?
- Have you thought about all the options and are you certain that you are gaining access to height using the safest means possible?

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

- 1 *The work at Height Regulations 2005 (as amended): A brief guide INDG401 (rev2)*
- 2 *Roof repair work - what you need to know as a busy builder CIS60*
- 3 *Fragile roofs - what you need to know as a busy builder CIS68*



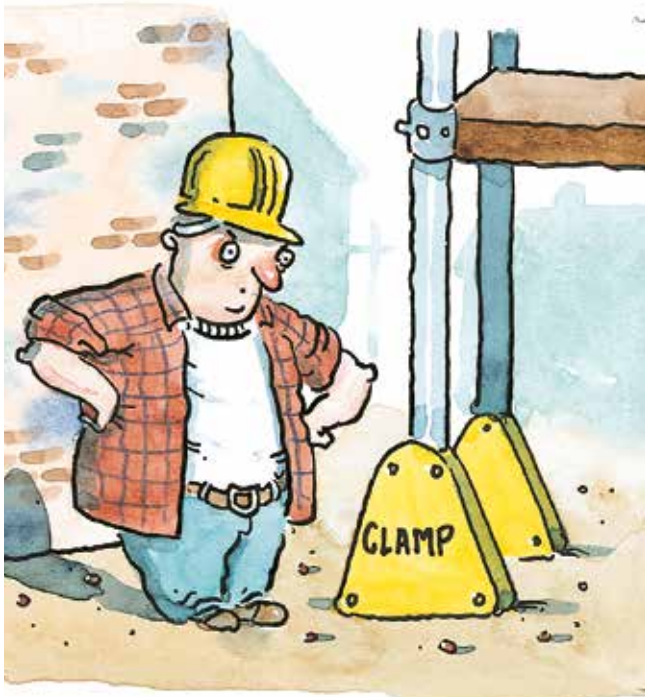
'...are there effective barriers or warning notices in place to stop people using an incomplete scaffold?'

Scaffolds

- Are scaffolds erected, altered and dismantled by competent people?
- Are all uprights provided with base plates (and, where necessary, timber sole plates)?
- Are all uprights, ledgers, braces and struts in position?
- Is the scaffold secured to the building or structure in enough places to prevent collapse?
- Are there double guard rails and toe boards, or other suitable protection, at every edge to prevent falling?

A self-employed painter was killed when he fell from the first lift of a scaffold as he was painting a bedroom window. There was no intermediate guard rail or toe board where he fell.

- Are additional brick guards provided to prevent materials falling from scaffolds?
- Are the working platforms fully boarded, and are the boards arranged to avoid tipping or tripping?
- Are there effective barriers or warning notices in place to stop people using an incomplete scaffold, eg where working platforms are not fully boarded?



'...have the wheels of tower scaffolds been locked when in use and are the platforms empty when they are moved?'

Scaffolds

- Is the scaffold strong enough to carry the weight of materials stored on it and are these evenly distributed?
- Are scaffolds being properly maintained? Are scaffold boards fit for purpose?
- Does a competent person inspect the scaffold or proprietary tower scaffold regularly, eg at least once a week; and always after it has been altered, damaged and following bad weather?
- Are the results of inspections recorded?

A painter fell 6 m when a domestic-type tower scaffold overturned. He was using a ladder on the tower platform to paint the upper storey of a two-storey house.

- Are tower scaffolds being erected using either the '3T' or advance guard rail method, and are they being used in accordance with suppliers' instructions?
- Have the wheels of tower scaffolds been locked when in use and are the platforms empty when they are moved?

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

- 1 *General access towers and scaffolds CIS49*
- 2 *Inspection and reports CIS47*



'...are ladders secured at the top and bottom to prevent them slipping sideways and outwards?'

Ladders

- Ladders and stepladders are the last resort. Can you buy or hire some alternative equipment that would provide a safer means of access?
- Is the work of short duration and low risk?
- Are they in good condition?
- Do ladders rest against a solid surface and not on fragile or insecure materials?
- Are ladders secured at the top and bottom to prevent them slipping sideways and outwards?



'...are the ladders positioned so that users don't have to overstretch?'

Ladders

- Do ladders rise at least a metre above their landing place? If not, are there other handholds available?
- Are the ladders positioned so that users don't have to overstretch?
- Do you have to use the top three rungs of a stepladder? If so your stepladder is too short.
- Is the user competent? Those using ladders should be trained to use the equipment safely.

Over a four-year period, 36 people died falling from ladders. That is 24% of falls in construction. A third of those who died were painters and decorators.

A construction worker was killed when he fell from an unsecured ladder while trying to climb onto a flat garage roof.

For more information, see free HSE leaflets:

- 1** *The Work at Height Regulations 2005 (as amended): A brief guide* INDG401
- 2** *Safe use of ladders and stepladders: An employer's guide* INDG455
- 3** *A toolbox talk on leaning ladder and stepladder safety* INDG403



'...is there edge protection to stop people or materials falling?'

Roofwork

- Is there edge protection to stop people or materials falling?
- During industrial roofing, have nets been provided to stop people falling from the leading edge of the roof and from partially fixed sheets?
- Where nets are used, have they been hung safely?
- Have you identified fragile materials such as cement sheets and roof lights which could be fragile?
- Have you taken precautions to stop people falling through fragile materials when working on the roof, eg by providing barriers, covers or working platforms?
- Are people kept away from the area below the roof work?
- Are roofworkers trained and experienced to recognise the risks and are they competent to do the work?

Over 50% of fatal injuries to roofers are falls through fragile materials and over 30% are falls from edges and openings.

A roofer was killed when he fell through an unprotected fragile roof light while stripping and resheeting an industrial pitched roof.

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 (as amended): A brief guide INDG401

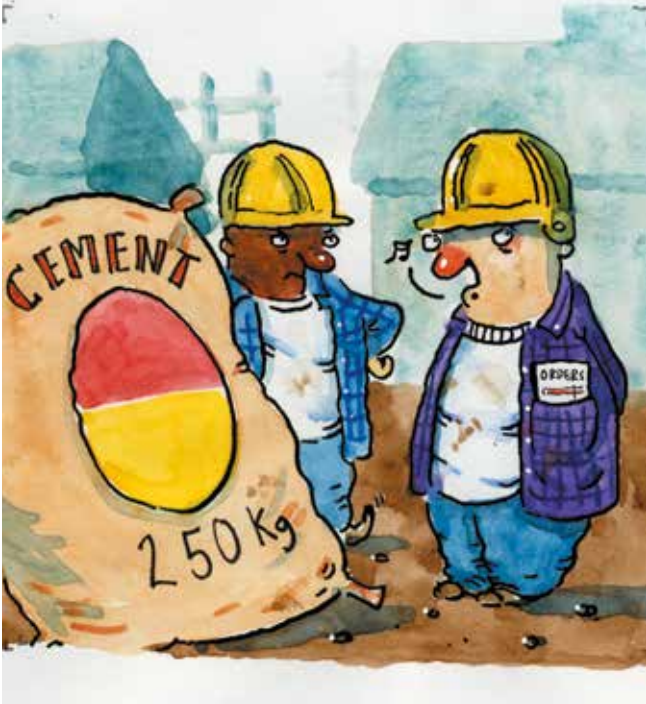


'...is the excavation regularly inspected by a competent person?'

Excavations

- Is there enough support for the excavation, or has it been sloped or battered back to a safe angle?
- Is a safe method used for putting in the support, without people working in an unsupported trench?
- Is there safe access into the excavation, eg a sufficiently long, secured ladder?
- Are there barriers or other protection to stop people and vehicles falling in?
- Are properly secured stop blocks provided to prevent tipping vehicles falling in?
- Could the excavation affect the stability of neighbouring structures or services?
- Are materials, spoil and plant stored away from the edge of the excavation to reduce the chance of a collapse?
- Is the excavation regularly inspected by a competent person?

A labourer was crushed and killed by a fall of earth while he was pipelaying in a 4 m deep trench. A trench box was provided, but he was working 3 m beyond the box.



'...can you order materials such as cement and aggregates in 25 kg bags?'

Manual handling

- Are there heavy materials such as roof trusses, concrete lintels, kerbstones or bagged products which could cause problems if they have to be moved by hand?

If so, can you:

- choose lighter materials?
 - use trolleys, hoists, telehandlers and other plant or equipment so that manual lifting of heavy objects is kept to a minimum?
 - order materials such as cement and aggregates in 25 kg bags?
 - avoid the repetitive laying of heavy building blocks or other masonry units weighing more than 20 kg?
- Have people been instructed and trained how to use lifting aids and other handling equipment safely?
 - Have people been trained how to lift safely?

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

- 1 *Handling kerbs: Reducing the risks of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) CIS57*
- 2 *Preventing injury from handling heavy blocks CIS77*
- 3 *Preventing injury during plasterboard handling CIS76*



'...are your employees provided with sensible safety footwear with a good grip?'

Loading and unloading goods

- Have you checked that the load has not moved or destabilised during the journey to site?
- Is there an exclusion zone around the loading/unloading area to keep people who are not involved away from the work?
- Have you planned your method of unloading?
- Does your lifting equipment have a current thorough examination certificate?
- Do you have to access the back of the lorry at all, or can the preparation work be done from ground level? If not:
 - do you have a safe way of getting up and down from the back of the vehicle?
 - what do you have in place to prevent workers from falling off the back of the vehicle?
 - are your employees provided with sensible safety footwear with a good grip?



'...can reversing be avoided, eg by using a one-way system or a turning area. If not, are properly trained banksmen used?'

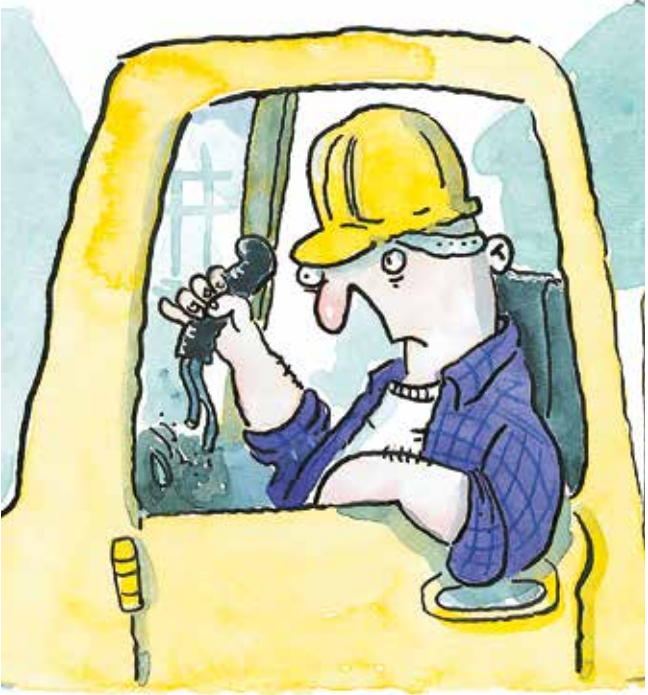
Traffic, vehicles and plant

- Are vehicles and pedestrians kept apart?
If not, do you:
 - provide barriers to separate them as much as you can?
 - tell people (eg your workers and anyone who lives or works in the property where you are working) about the problem, and what they need to do about it?
 - display warning signs?
- Are people kept away from slewing vehicles or, if not, can you use a zero tail-swing machine?

An experienced groundworker was crushed and killed by a slewing 360 excavator as it moved into position. He tried to pass between the machine and a trench box.

- Can reversing be avoided, eg by using a one-way system or a turning area? If not, are properly trained banksmen used?

A person was struck and killed by a van reversing at a roadworks site. The turning area in the site was blocked by parked cars and the driver reversed without assistance.



'...are vehicles and plant properly maintained...?'

Traffic, vehicles and plant

- Are vehicles and plant properly maintained, eg do the steering, brakes, hydraulics, mirrors and any other vision aid work properly? Are tyres in good condition and at the correct pressure?
- Have drivers received proper training and are they competent and fit to use the vehicles or plant they are operating?
- Are loads properly secured?
- Drivers of plant and equipment should not use mobile phones while driving or operating plant or workers should not use mobile phones in the vicinity of moving plant.
- Have you made sure that passengers are only carried on vehicles designed to carry them?
- Have you made sure that plant and vehicles are not used on dangerous slopes?
- If you need to work on or drive across sloping ground, have you checked that the plant and vehicles are safe to use?

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

Construction site transport safety: Safe use of site dumpers CIS52 (rev 1)



'...are the right tools or machinery being used for the job?'

Tools and machinery

- Are the right tools or machinery being used for the job?
- Are all dangerous parts guarded, eg gears, chain drives, projecting engine shafts?
- Are guards secured and in good repair?
- Are tools and machinery maintained in good repair and are all safety devices operating correctly?
- Are all operators trained and competent?

A driller was killed when his trousers became entangled in the rotating core barrel he was using.



'...are the operators trained and competent?'

Hoists

- Has the equipment been installed by a competent person?
- Are the operators trained and competent?
- Is the rated capacity clearly marked?
- Does the hoist have a current report of thorough examination and a record of inspection?

A jobbing builder was killed when he was crushed between the cage and the fixed structure of a goods hoist. The hoist moved unexpectedly because the safety interlocks had been defeated. The hoist had been poorly maintained and did not have a current thorough examination report.

- Is there a suitable base enclosure to prevent people from being struck by any moving part of the hoist?
- Are the landing gates kept shut except when the platform is at the landing?



*'...are there enough suitable escape routes
and are these kept clear?'*

Emergencies

- Are there emergency procedures, eg for evacuating the site in case of fire?
- Do people on site know what the procedures are?
- Is there a means of raising the alarm, and does it work?
- Is there a way to contact the emergency services from site?
- Are there enough suitable escape routes and are these kept clear?
- Is the first-aid provision good enough?



'...are suitable fire extinguishers provided?'

Fire

- Is the quantity of flammable materials, liquids and gases kept to a minimum?
- Are they properly stored?
- Are flammable gas cylinders returned to a ventilated store at the end of the shift?
- Are smoking and other ignition sources banned in areas where gases or flammable liquids are stored or used?
- Are gas cylinders, associated hoses and equipment properly maintained and in good condition?
- When gas cylinders are not in use, are the valves fully closed?
- Is flammable and combustible waste removed regularly and stored in suitable bins or skips?
- Are suitable fire extinguishers provided?

A road worker was killed when a petrol storage tank exploded. The tank had been emptied, cleared of sludge, ventilated, and declared gas-free, but hot metal from welding ignited petrol in the pumps/pipework – which were still connected.



'...have you identified all harmful substances and materials...?'

Hazardous substances

- Have you identified all harmful substances and materials such as:
 - Silica dust from cutting materials containing concrete or sand e.g. kerbs, roof tiles and paving slabs, or tracking walls
 - wood dust and other dusts from materials such as gypsum, cement, limestone
 - asbestos, lead, solvent, paint, petrol, diesel, hot tar and carbon monoxide (produced by gas appliances when there is not sufficient air for them to work correctly, and engine exhausts)
 - Micro-organisms e.g. from bird droppings, weils disease, tetanus
- Have workers had adequate information and training so they know what the risks are from the hazardous substances used and produced on site, and what they need to do to avoid the hazard / minimise the risks?
- Have you got procedures to prevent contact with wet cement? (as this can cause dermatitis and cement burns)
- Have you arranged health surveillance for people using certain hazardous substances (e.g. lead, silica, cement)

For more information, see free HSE leaflets:

- 1 Construction dust CIS36 (rev 2)
- 2 Controlling construction dust with on tool extraction CIS69
- 3 Managing construction health risks
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/>
- 4 Cement CIS26 (rev 2)



'...have workers had information and training on asbestos?'

Asbestos Information

- Have you seen the demolition/refurbishment asbestos survey for where you are going to work? (This should be done by a competent and experienced surveyor). The survey must locate and identify all asbestos containing materials before any structural work begins
- Have you checked whether a licensed contractor is needed to deal with asbestos on site?
- Has everyone working with asbestos containing materials received appropriate information, instruction and training? There are three main types of training:
 - Asbestos awareness
 - Non-licensable work with asbestos, including Notifiable Non-licensed work (NNLW)
 - Licensable work with asbestos
- Are you using the correct personal protective equipment?
 - Type 5 / 6 disposable overalls
 - Non laced boots
 - Suitable face mask (RPE) with an Assigned Protection Factor of 20 or more e.g. disposable respirator type FFP3. You need to be fit tested (when clean shaven) before the work starts, to make sure that the RPE fits you and then you need to be properly clean shaven each time you need to wear your face mask
- If you are working with asbestos containing materials have you seen the risk assessment and plan of work?

For more information, see free HSE leaflets:

- 1 *Asbestos essentials HSG210 (3rd edition)*
- 2 *Managing and working with asbestos – L143 Approved Code of Practice*



'...have workers had info and training on Silica?'

Silica Dust

- Have you identified and put into place precautions to:
 - Stop or reduce the dust, for example you could use the right size of building materials so less cutting or preparation is needed;
 - Stop the dust getting into the air. There are two main ways of doing this:
 - using tools fitted with dust extraction
 - using tools fitted with water suppression
- Do not:
 - dry sweep – use vacuum or wet cleaning;
 - use compressed air for removing dust from clothing
- Have all people working near to silica dust been face fit tested and issued with the appropriate FFP3 masks (as for asbestos fibres above)?
- If working indoors have you maximised air ventilation rate without putting others at risk?
- You may already have the right controls in place, but are they all working properly? Check the controls work by:
 - Having procedures to ensure that work is done in the right way
 - Checking controls are effective. Does the work still seem dusty?
 - Maintaining equipment: follow instructions in maintenance manuals;
 - Supervising workers. Make sure they use the controls provided

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

- 1 *Construction Dust CIS36 (rev 2)*
- 2 *Controlling construction dust with on tool extraction CIS69*
- 3 *Control of exposure to silica dust - A guide for employees INDG463*
- 4 *Respiratory protective equipment at work a practical guide. HSG53 (Fourth edition).*



'...is suitable hearing protection provided and worn in noisy areas?'

Noise

- Have you identified and assessed workers' exposure to noise?
- Have workers had information and training so they know what the risks are from noise on site, and what they need to do to avoid those risks?
- Can the noise be reduced by using different working methods or selecting quieter plant, eg by fitting breakers and other plant or machinery with silencers?
- Are people not involved in the work kept away from the source of the noise?
- Is suitable hearing protection provided and worn in noisy areas?
- Have hearing protection zones been marked?
- Have you arranged health surveillance for people exposed to high levels of noise?

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

Noise at work INDG362 (rev 2)



'...have you limited the time that each worker uses high-vibration tools?'

Hand-arm vibration

- Has exposure to HAV been avoided or reduced as much as possible by selecting suitable work methods and plant?
 - Have you chosen the lowest vibration tool that is suitable and can do the job efficiently?
 - Have you limited the time that each worker uses high-vibration tools such as concrete breakers, angle grinders or hammer drills as far as possible?
- Have workers had information and training so they know what the risks are from hand-arm vibration (HAV) on site, and what they need to do to avoid those risks?
- Have vibrating tools been properly maintained including keeping bits and drills sharp?
- Have you arranged health surveillance for people exposed to high levels of hand-arm vibration, especially when exposed for long periods?

For more information, see HSE leaflets:

- 1 *Control the risks from hand-arm vibration* INDG175 (rev 3)
- 2 *Hand-arm vibration: Advice for employees* INDG296 (rev 1)

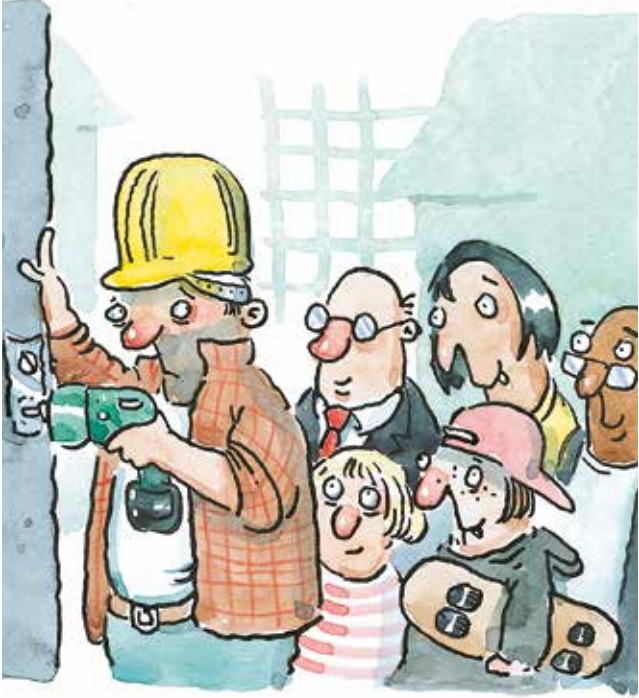


'...are tools and equipment checked by users, visually examined on site and regularly inspected and tested by a competent person?'

Electricity and other services

- Have all necessary services been provided on site before work begins and have you also identified existing services present on site (eg electric cables or gas mains) and taken effective steps, if necessary, to prevent danger from them?
- Are you using low voltage for tools and equipment, eg battery-operated tools or low-voltage systems?
- Are cables and leads protected from damage?
- Are all connections to the system properly made and are suitable plugs used?
- Are tools and equipment checked by users, visually examined on site and regularly inspected and tested by a competent person?
- Have hidden electricity cables and other services been located (eg with a locator and plans) and marked, and have you taken precautions for safe working?
- Where there are overhead lines, has the electricity supply been turned off, or have other precautions been taken, such as providing 'goal posts' or taped markers?

A driver was electrocuted when the hydraulic lifting arm he was using to offload spoil from his lorry contacted an 11 kV overhead line.



'...is the work fenced off from the public?'

Protecting the public

- Is the work fenced off from the public?
- Are roadworks barriered off and lit?
- Are the public protected from falling material?
- When work has stopped for the day:
 - is the boundary secure?
 - are all ladders removed or their rungs boarded so that they cannot be used?
 - are excavations and openings securely covered or fenced off?
 - is all plant immobilised to prevent unauthorised use?
 - are bricks and materials safely stacked?
 - are flammable or dangerous substances locked away in secure storage places?

A boy died when he fell from a scaffold at a residential block. He and other boys had gained access to the scaffold by climbing from a communal walkway.

HSE construction publications

Health and safety in construction HSG150
ISBN 978 0 7176 6182 4

The safe use of vehicles on construction sites HSG144
ISBN 978 0 7176 1610 7

Safe work in confined spaces: Approved Code of Practice, Regulations and guidance L101 ISBN 978 0 7176 1405 9

Health and safety in roof work HSG33
ISBN 978 0 7176 1425 7

Protecting the public: your next move HSG151
ISBN 978 0 7176 1148 5

Safe use of lifting equipment: Approved Code of Practice L113
ISBN 978 0 7176 1628 2

Managing health and safety in construction. Approved Code of Practice L144 ISBN 978 0 7176 6223 4

Backs for the future: Safe manual handling in construction
HSG149 ISBN 978 0 7176 1122 5

Safe use of work equipment: Approved Code of Practice and guidance L22 ISBN 978 0 7176 6295 1

Managing and working with asbestos. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L143 ISBN 978 0 7176 6618 8

Avoiding danger from underground services HSG47 ISBN 978 0 7176 6584 6

Fire safety in construction HSG168 ISBN 978 0 7176 6345

Information available to download from www.hse.gov.uk

HSENI and HSE publications

For information about health and safety contact HSENI's
Helpline: 0800 0320 121 Tel: (028) 9024 3249
Fax: (028) 9023 5383
E-mail: mail@hseni.gov.uk Textphone (028) 9054 6896

HSENI Leaflets are available free of charge from HSENI or can be downloaded from www.hseni.gov.uk.

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Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk).

This booklet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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Social Media

Keep up to date with health & safety by following us on twitter @hsenigov and liking our facebook page www.facebook.com/hseni.gov.uk



Opening times

Monday-Thursday 9am-5pm
Friday 9am-4:30pm

Car parking

Our car park at Ladas Way is available to visitors.

Contact Details

**For all your enquiries on
workplace health and safety**

HSENI

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