

ADVICE & GUIDANCE FROM THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

“The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and associated Regulations require proper control of health and safety risks arising from the work. Workers on site and members of the public may be particularly affected. Decent welfare facilities are also required. The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 also put responsibilities on clients and designers for many construction projects. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for enforcing all these legal requirements and projects often need to be notified to HSE.

1. What are the risks?

The three main killers in construction each year tend to be:

- a. falls from height – competently erected work platforms with proper edge protection are needed and ladders should only be used for light work of very short duration if in good condition and properly secured against slipping or overturning,
- b. site transport on larger jobs - segregation from people and reversing are particular problems,
- c. collapse of excavations and structures – proper engineered support is needed and for structures that usually requires clear advice from a structural engineer.

In London we have seen several serious accidents – some fatal - involving electrical installations and these would have been prevented by careful isolation of existing 240 volt systems and use of [yellow] 110 volt equipment.

Tripping over materials on an untidy site has caused many serious injuries (including fractured ribs, legs and arms) and delays to projects – clear access routes and good housekeeping are needed.

An ever-present risk is falling materials and debris – debris chutes, scaffolds with netting are often needed and ‘bombing’ of materials is unacceptable.

On the health front, existing buildings often contain asbestos materials and a proper survey will usually be needed so these can be identified. A licensed contractor may have to be engaged to remove them if necessary. Non-domestic clients have specific responsibilities for managing asbestos in buildings from 21st May 2004. Manual handling of heavy or awkward materials can cause serious back problems – use lighter materials (eg avoid 20 kg concrete blocks) or mechanical means to help eg with concrete lintels.

Decent welfare facilities including toilet and wash basin with running hot/cold or warm water, soap and towels are legally required a mark of decent treatment for those working on the site.

2. Choosing a competent contractor

If you are considering having any work done to your property and you require a building contractor, you should consider the choice very carefully. Is the builder competent in health and safety matters? You might want to ask about:

training and expertise in the particular type of building work you want done and examples of previous jobs

knowledge and training in managing health and safety risks on construction sites including carrying out risk assessments and producing method statements

what arrangements they would make to provide adequate welfare facilities on the site

If you don't intend to live in the property after the work is finished (non-domestic client) you may have legal responsibilities under The Construction (Design and Management Regulations 1994. These include: engaging a competent principal contractor and planning supervisor and providing reasonable information about risks (eg presence of asbestos). Your designer should be able to advise you.

3. Health and safety advice

Two publications available from HSE Books give a useful introduction to health and safety during construction work:

“The absolutely essential health and safety Tool kit for the construction contractor” IND (G) 344 single copies FREE ISBN 0-7176-2103-0

“ Health and Safety in Construction” HSG 150 price £9.95 ISBN 0-7176-2106-5

The publications explain the essential tasks for achieving good health and safety on building sites. They help to identify hazards and control risks . They explain how to plan, organise and control health and safety risks on your building site. HS (G) 150 includes information on notifying HSE, risk assessments, safe work at height including work on scaffolds and protecting members of the public for a range of building works.

HSE Books can be contacted at Tel. No. 01787-881-165 and their web site www.hsebooks.co.uk

Several free leaflets and other guidance can be found on HSE's web site www.hse.gov.uk and free advice is available from HSE Info Line Tel No. 08701-545-500.

Further HSE guidance on construction is available on the web site <http://www.uk.com> under “Answers to all your health and safety questions”.

4. How to contact HSE Construction Inspectors in London

The London address for the HSE offices are;

HSE (Field Operations) Construction Division
Rose Court
2 Southwark Bridge
London SE1 9HS
Tel 0207-556-2100 Fax 0207-556-2109

For London, HSE construction Inspectors are in 3 teams covering: West End and West London; North and East London; City and South London.