



THE



ABSOLUTELY



ESSENTIAL

HEALTH
and
SAFETY

TOOLKIT

FOR THE SMALLER
CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR

TURNING CONCERN INTO ACTION

A message from Kevin Myers, Chief Inspector of construction



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.

Too many people in the construction industry are injured or suffer health problems. The unacceptably high levels of injuries and ill health can be reduced by simple precautions.

Make use of this toolkit. If we all work together we can make the construction industry a healthier and safer place to work in.

Kevin Myers

HM Chief Inspector of Construction

Chair of the Health and Safety Commission's Construction Industry Advisory Committee

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

HSE InfoLine

Tel: 08701 545500
email: hseinformationservices@natbrit.com
Fax: 02920 859260
Post: HSE Information Services
Caerphilly Business Park
Caerphilly CF83 3GG

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? (HSE's InfoLine - telephone 08701 545500 - is there to help).
- ☐ Take pride in your standards?

For more information, see:

- 1** *Health and safety in construction HSG150 from HSE Books, tel: 01787 881165.*
- 2** *HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk*
- 3** *CONIAC's Working Well Together website at <http://www.uk.com>*
- 4** *Having construction work done? MISC193 HSE free leaflet*

email riddor@natbrit.com
internet www.riddor.gov.uk
Tel 0845 300 9923
Fax 0845 300 9924
Post Incident Contact Centre
Caerphilly Business Park
Caerphilly CF83 3GG



RIDDOR reporting

REPORTING ACCIDENTS

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

- ☐ Notify the 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.
- ☐ 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:

- ▼ In writing, using the form in HSE31(rev1), and then either faxing it on 0845 300 9924, or posting to:
Incident Contact Centre
Caerphilly Business Park
Caerphilly CF83 3GG
- ▼ By telephone on 0845 300 9923
- ▼ Over the internet on www.riddor.gov.uk

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

RIDDOR explained HSE31(rev1)



Working Well Together is an industry-wide construction health and safety campaign developed by the Health and Safety Commission's Construction Industry Advisory Committee (CONIAC)

wwt helpline: 0845 27 27 500 website: wwt.uk.com

EMPLOYING

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

- ☐ they are trained and competent to do the job safely and without putting their health 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 discuss health and safety issues with them (or their representatives)?

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 HSE InfoLine on 08701 545500



*Everyone who works in construction can make a difference,
but only if people work well together*

wwt helpline: 0845 27 27 500
website: wwt.uk.com

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?
- ☐ discuss 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?



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.

More detailed information can be found in
HSG150 *Health and safety in construction*
and other HSE publications



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

ACCESS ON SITE

- ☐ Can everyone get to their place of work safely - and work there safely?
- ☐ 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 adequate?



'...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?

For more information, see free HSE leaflets:

- 1 Provision of welfare facilities at fixed construction sites CIS18 (rev)***
- 2 Provision of welfare facilities at transient construction sites CIS46***



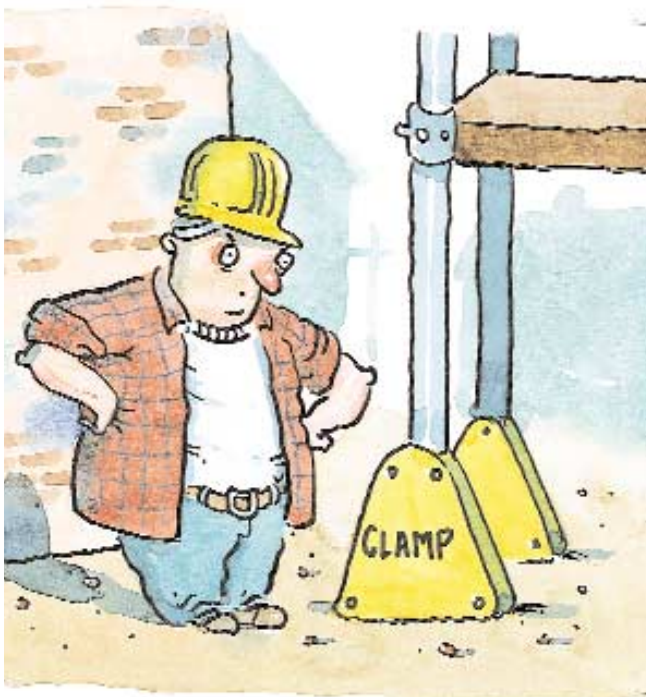
'...are there effective barriers or warning notices in place to stop people using an incomplete scaffold?'

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?
- ☐ Does a competent person inspect the scaffold regularly, eg at least once a week; and always after it has been altered, damaged and following extreme 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.

- ☐ Have proprietary tower scaffolds been erected 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 leaflets:

- 1 General access scaffolds and ladders CIS 49***
- 2 Tower scaffolds CIS 10 (rev 3)***



'...are ladders secured to prevent them slipping sideways or outwards?'

LADDERS

- ☐ Are ladders the right way to do the job?
- ☐ Are they in good condition?
- ☐ Do ladders rest against a solid surface and not on fragile or insecure materials?
- ☐ Are ladders secured to prevent them slipping sideways or outwards?
- ☐ Do ladders rise a sufficient height above their landing place? If not, are there other hand-holds available?
- ☐ Are the ladders positioned so that users don't have to over-stretch?

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 leaflet:

General access scaffolds and ladders CIS49



'...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?
- ☐ 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?

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 re-sheeting an industrial pitched roof.

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

Working on roofs INDG284



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

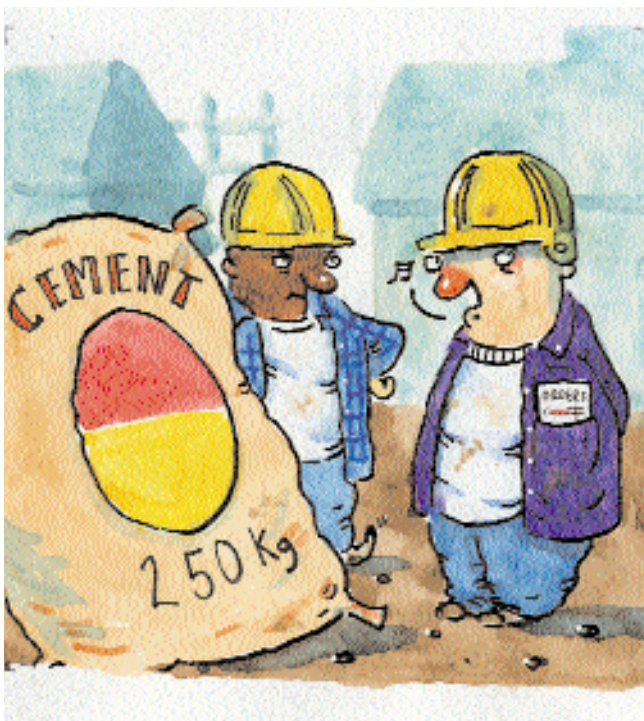
EXCAVATIONS

- ☐ Is there adequate 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.

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

Safety in excavations CIS8 (rev)



'...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 wheelbarrows, 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 weighing more than 20 kg?
- ☐ Have people been instructed and trained how to lift safely?

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

Handling heavy building blocks CIS37



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

TRAFFIC, VEHICLES AND PLANT

- ☐ Are vehicles and pedestrians kept apart?

If not, do you:

- ▼ separate them as much as you can, using barriers?
- ▼ tell people about the problem, and what to do about it?
- ▼ display warning signs?

- ☐ Is there adequate clearance around slewing vehicles?

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, 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, lights, handbrake and footbrake work properly?
- ☐ Have drivers received proper training and are they competent for the vehicles or plant they are operating?
- ☐ Are loads properly secured?
- ☐ 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?

For more information, see free HSE leaflet:

Construction site transport safety: safe use of compact dumpers CIS52



'...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.



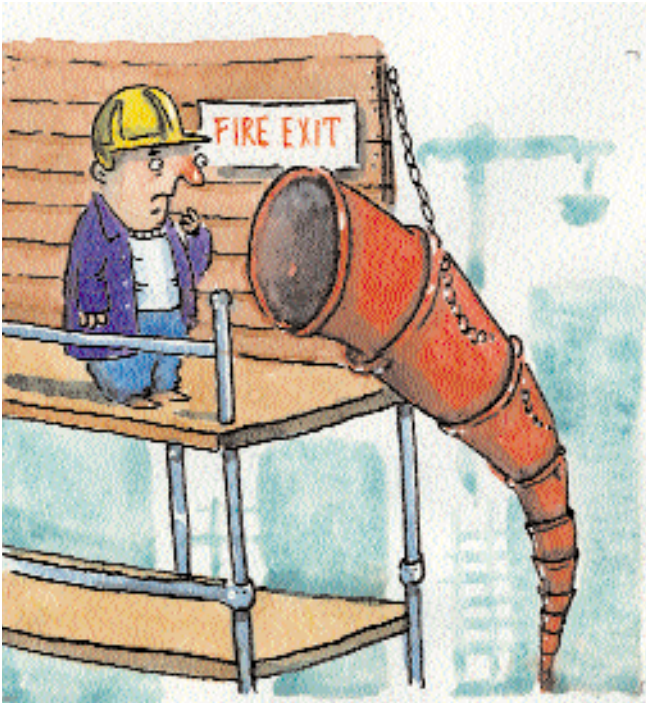
'...are the operators trained and competent?'

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 adequate 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 adequate escape routes and are these kept clear?
- ☐ Is there adequate first-aid provision?



'...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.

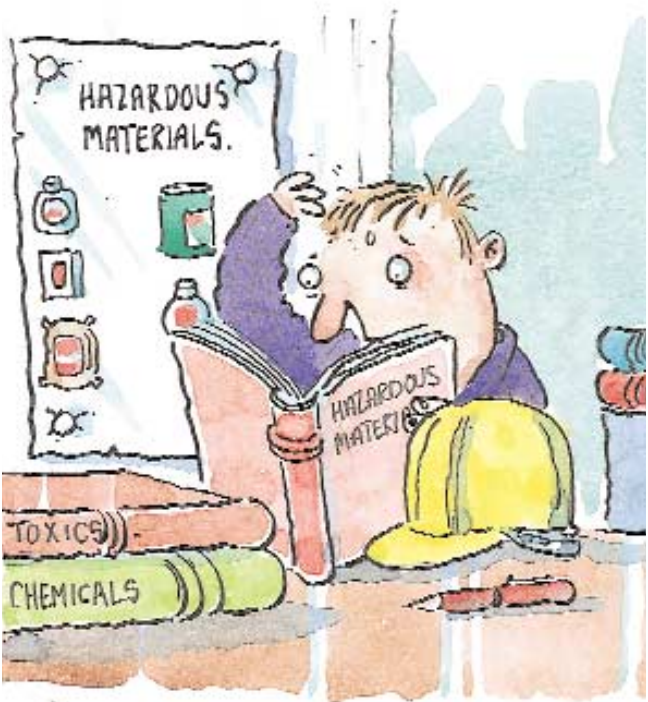
For more information, see free HSE leaflet



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

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

- ☐ Have you identified all harmful substances and materials, such as asbestos, lead, solvents, paints, cement and dust?
- ☐ Have you checked whether a licensed contractor is needed to deal with asbestos on site? (Most work with asbestos requires a licence, although you can do some very limited work with materials that contain asbestos without one.)
- ☐ Have you identified and put into place precautions to prevent or control exposure to hazardous substances, by:
 - ▼ doing the work in a different way, to remove the risk entirely?
 - ▼ using a less hazardous material?
 - ▼ using tools fitted with dust extraction?



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

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

- ☐ Have workers had 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 those 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 (eg lead)?

For more information, see free HSE leaflets:

- 1 *Working with asbestos in buildings* INDG289
- 2 *Understanding health surveillance at work* INDG304

and HSE priced guidance:

- 1 *Asbestos essentials: task manual* HSG210
- 2 *Introduction to asbestos essentials* HSG213
- 3 *Rash decisions* video ISBN 0 7176 1879 X
- 4 *How are you today?* video ISBN 0 7176 1945 1



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

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?
- ☐ Have you identified and assessed workers' exposure to noise?
- ☐ 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 in construction INDG127



'...have you identified and assessed risks to workers from prolonged use of vibrating tools?'

HAND-ARM VIBRATION

- ☐ 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 you identified and assessed risks to workers from prolonged use of vibrating tools such as concrete breakers, angle grinders or hammer drills?
- ☐ Has exposure to HAV been reduced as much as possible by selecting suitable work methods and plant?
- ☐ Are reduced-vibration tools used wherever possible?
- ☐ Have vibrating tools been properly maintained?
- ☐ 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 free HSE leaflets:

- 1** *Health risks from hand-arm vibration - advice for employers* INDG175 (rev)
- 2** *Hand-arm vibration syndrome - pocket card for employees* INDG296P
- 3** *Hard to handle* video ISBN 0 7176 1881 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?'

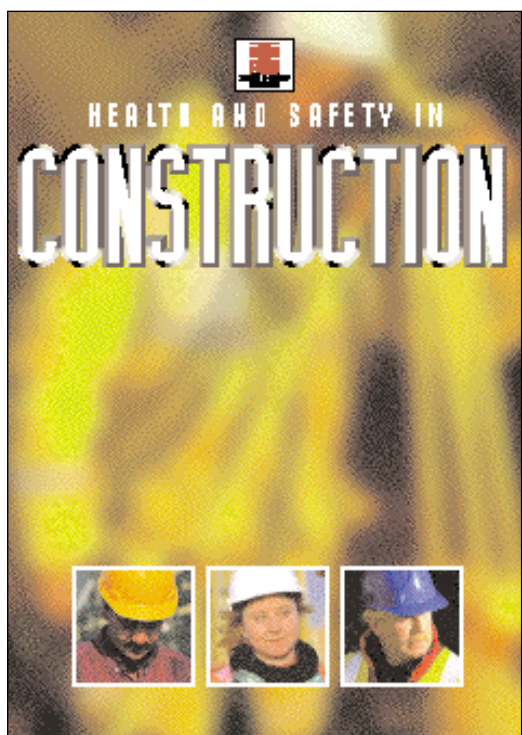
PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

- ☐ 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.

For more information, see HSE video:

Game over ISBN 0 7176 1875 7



Health and safety in construction
HSE publication HSG150

HSE CONSTRUCTION PUBLICATIONS

- ▼ *The safe use of vehicles on construction sites* ISBN 0 7176 1610 X £7.95
- ▼ *Health and safety in excavations: be safe and shore* ISBN 0 7176 1563 4 £8.50
- ▼ *Safe work in confined spaces: Confined Spaces Regulations 1997. Approved Code of Practice, Regulations and guidance* ISBN 0 7176 1405 0 £7.50
- ▼ *Electrical safety on construction sites* ISBN 0 7176 1000 4 £8.75
- ▼ *Health and safety in roof work* ISBN 0 7176 1425 5 £8.50
- ▼ *Protecting the public: your next move* ISBN 0 7176 1148 5 £7.95
- ▼ *Safe use of lifting equipment: Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice* ISBN 0 7176 1628 2 £8.00
- ▼ *A guide to managing health and safety in construction* ISBN 0 7176 0755 0 £8.50
- ▼ *Designing for health and safety in construction* ISBN 0 7176 0807 7 £7.95
- ▼ *Fire safety in construction work* ISBN 0 7176 1332 1 £8.95
- ▼ *Backs for the future: safe manual handling in construction* ISBN 0 7176 1122 1 £8.50
- ▼ *Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989. Guidance on Regulations* ISBN 0 7176 1478 6 £5.50
- ▼ *Safe use of work equipment: Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance* ISBN 0 7176 1626 6 £8.00

HSE videos

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- ▼ This leaflet 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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Working Well Together helpline: 0845 27 27 500

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