



Welcome.

Fatal injuries in the construction industry have been confirmed at an all time low for the period 2009/2010.

This correlates with The National Association of Scaffold Contractors reporting a 30% reduction in fatalities amongst its member companies.

To ensure continued improvements the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have commissioned Frontline to evaluate the impact of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 (CDM2007). To commence this research a series of open events are being held throughout October.

In recent months a number of useful resources have been published to assist in reducing the number of common and catastrophic injuries and in this edition we highlight new guidance on fire safety, explosion risk from foamed concrete, handling of plasterboard, crushing risks from stacked board and from mobile elevated working platforms (MEWPS).

Finally we raise awareness of opportunities for subsidised training and report that suction excavation techniques are becoming more common to minimise the costs associated with damaging underground services.

HSE publish updated guide on construction fire safety

An updated edition of the HSE standard Fire Safety in Construction is available to download [here](#).

This book is designed to help those involved in construction identify the main causes of accidents to support those with legal responsibilities under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 while assisting site managers in the day-to-day management of fire risks on site.

Much of the guidance is not new but lessons from past fires have strengthened sections covering multi-storey buildings and high risk building such as erecting timber framed buildings.



Foamed concrete explosion

The risk of fire/explosion was brought home in August 2009 when hydrogen gas, evolved from curing foamed concrete, was ignited by operatives using angle grinders. The resultant explosion was sufficient to thrust the operatives in to the roof of the building with inevitable injury.

The investigation report into this incident is available [here](#).

The reason for the evolution of hydrogen was due to the concrete mix including incinerator bottom ash aggregate (IBAA) which has been shown to contain a significant proportion of aluminium.

Aluminium is known to react with cement/concrete mixtures to form hydrogen gas. The presence of a steel walkway above the concrete pour created a confined space for the hydrogen to collect.

Whilst IBAA is not banned the report recommends:

- Various test arrangements of the IBAA for the production of hydrogen
- Assessing fire/explosion risk if hydrogen will be evolved
- Ensuring adequate natural or forced ventilation is provided to keep the concentration of hydrogen in air well below the lower explosive limit.

Manual handling of plasterboard

Muscular skeletal disorders continue to be a major cause of accidents and ill health in the construction incidents and are a significant contributor to insurance costs.

A Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) research in to handling plasterboard has made specific recommendations in the following areas.

1. Provide mechanical assistance
2. Provide safe systems of work
3. Change the way dry lining operatives are paid
4. Reduce dimensions of board
5. Reduce weight of loads
6. Label loads
7. Team handling of plasterboard
8. Provide training in manual handling for all workers
9. Increase task variety
10. Improve communication between stakeholders.

Whilst introducing handling aids and changing dimensions of plasterboard can meet some resistance in the industry, the report accessible here, makes sensible recommendations on procedural controls that should be considered by all.

Fatality from stacked boards

Whilst manual handling of boards presents every day risks, the arrangements for storage of all board materials should be assessed with specific controls introduced.

A recent HSE alert, here, highlights the risk and key controls.

MEWPS - avoiding trapping/ crushing injuries

The increased use of MEWPS has contributed significantly to reducing risk of falls from height with benefits of efficient working.

A corresponding increase in accidents where the operative has become trapped or crushed between the MEWP and the work structure has led to the Construction Plant Hire Association producing guidance, available here.

Subsidised training offer from HSE

Premier Partnership will be delivering a new funded training programme on behalf of the HSE. The programme was launched as part of HSE 'Do Your Bit' Campaign.

The training is subsidised by up to 75% of original costs and has a strong "People Skills" element. The focus is on organisations with 20 to 400 employees and applications from the Construction sector will be welcomed until the initiative ends in March 2011.

Click for further detail

Underground services – air lance and suction excavation

A major contractor has starting using air lance and vacuum suction techniques to excavate around underground services. The construction industry incurs significant costs following strikes against underground services whether through financial penalties, increased insurance costs or the hidden costs of associated employee accidents.

QBE welcomes the introduction of new technology to minimise this significant area of loss and would encourage all ground work contractors to consider such technology.



QBE Risk Management

This bulletin is produced by the Risk Management team within QBE's UK & Ireland Casualty division. We are a team of dedicated professionals who work closely with our clients to actively assist with accident prevention, employee rehabilitation and claims mitigation.

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