

# Health and Safety

## Who should read this fact sheet ?

Statistics from the UK Health and Safety Executive show that on average one or two people are killed every week as a result of construction work. Occupational ill-health, which can accumulate over time, accounts for further loss of life. This fact sheet provides an introduction to health and safety best practice for construction companies and construction industry professionals, clients and their advisors.

## What is health and safety ?

In simple terms, health and safety is about identifying risks and eliminating or controlling them to prevent accidents and occupational ill-health. All construction work must comply with stringent UK health and safety legislation - see [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) for the most up-to-date information.

## Why are good health and safety processes important ?

Accidents and ill-health have both a human cost and a financial cost. Lost time and materials, higher insurance premiums, compensation claims and possibly legal costs are the most obvious potential impacts. There are also indirect costs in terms of potential damage to reputation which can make it harder for a company to attract business or new employees or for a project to obtain funding. Good health and safety processes demonstrate respect for people whether they are employees, clients or local communities hosting a construction project.

Long-term health effects are usually slower to be realised but the costs and long-term implications can be far more significant than accidents and should not be underestimated.

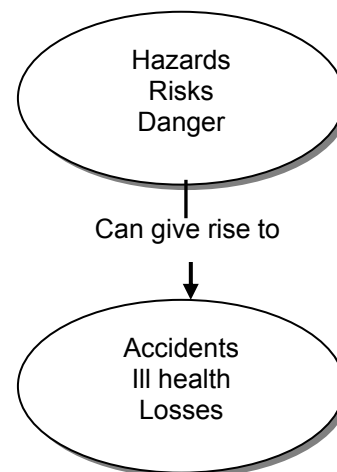
Construction has one of the highest rates of accidents and incidences of ill-health of all employment sectors. High risk activities, poor training and inadequate safeguards all contribute.

It need not be this way. There are measures your company can take to minimise the risks.

## Who is responsible for health and safety ?

Everyone involved in construction has a responsibility for Health and Safety. Planners and designers must ensure their designs provide a safe and healthy environment for the eventual user and that the designs can be constructed and maintained without exposing the workforce to undue risk. Construction workers have legal rights to safe working conditions and safe plant and equipment and they have a responsibility to protect themselves, each other and the public. The law places detailed responsibilities on clients, designers, planning supervisors, contractors, suppliers and manufacturers of plant and equipment.

## Basic processes



At its most simple, good health and safety practice involves creating 'barriers' to prevent hazards, risks and danger becoming accidents, ill health and losses.

Such barriers can include:

- Education and training - possibly self-managed, for the self-employed - and kept up-to-date in line with changes in construction techniques.
- Rules and procedures, which are regularly reviewed
- Physical barriers and signs
- Warning devices, such as alarms and sirens.

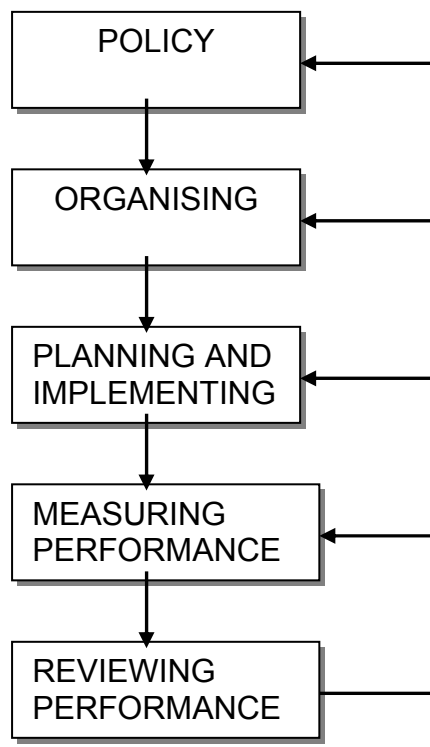
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## What are the risks ?

Statistics show that people falling from heights and objects falling from heights and striking people are by far the most common type of accident. Becoming caught or trapped; struck by vehicles; exposed to electric current, fires or explosions; and lifting and carrying are other common causes of injury. The major occupational health problems arise from chemical hazards, such as liquid, dusts, gasses and fumes, or physical hazards such as cold, heat, noise, vibration, ionising radiation, compressed air, lasers and manual handling.

## Constructing a health and safety policy and programme

This is a simple but effective strategic framework:



**Policy** Every organisation needs to draw up a statement of policy on how it will manage health and safety, including how responsibilities will be allocated. The policy should take into account the nature of the construction activities involved and the size of the organisation.

**Organising** An adequately resourced and effective management structure must be in place to deliver the policy. Arrangements should ensure effective employee involvement and participation. Employees should be properly trained for their work and empowered to work safely and be motivated to protect their long-term health as well as avoiding accidents.

**Planning and Implementing** Adopting and adhering to a formal health and safety management system provides a planned and systematic approach to reducing risk. Formal health and safety management system. Hazard identification is followed by risk assessment and the implementation of appropriate and effective risk control measures. Sometimes previous ways may not be best, and new procedures and approaches are needed.

**Measuring performance** This identifies when and where improvements can and need to be made. Measurement should be a proactive and continuous, rather than a reactive analysis of accident records. It needs to embrace both the hardware (plant, materials, equipment) and also the systems and the people. The objective is to identify any substandard performance and devise improvement measures which may be long or short term.

**Reviewing performance** A systematic review of Health and Safety performance, perhaps involving external comparison with best practice within the industry, will permit the re-evaluation and development of all the other aspects of the strategy. Performance review could involve measurement against key performance indicators appropriate to the nature of the business activities. The review function provides a 'feedback' loop to enable improvements to be made to the other elements.

## Regular Audits

Health and Safety systems, in common with other management processes, can deteriorate over time. Working methods, materials, plant or people can change. The aim of regularly auditing health and safety is to establish whether existing control measures are still relevant and to identify where additional or revised measures are needed.

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### Further Assistance

The UK **Health and Safety Executive** (HSE) provides information for the construction industry on health and safety issues. Visit [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 2WA. Telephone: 01787 881165. Fax: 01787 313995. Website: [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk). HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

For information about health and safety issues, call the **HSE's Infoline**: 08701 545500 or e-mail: [hseinformationservices@natbrit.com](mailto:hseinformationservices@natbrit.com) or write to: HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly, CF83 3GG.

The **Construction Industry Training Board** (CITB) provides a wide range of publications and training relating to health and safety. An advice line is operated by the CITB health and safety development team – Telephone: 01485 577475 (Health and Safety Advice Service) or see the website: [www.citb.org.uk](http://www.citb.org.uk).

CITB publications are available by mail order: Telephone 01485 577800 to place an order. Titles include:

**Construction Site Safety: Health, Safety and Environmental Notes (GE700)**. This comprehensive, modular structured publication is issued in spring-binder format to enable easy updating. The book provides practical and clear advice and guidance on all important aspects of health, safety, welfare and environment for building, construction and civil engineering sites. All modules include references to relevant legislation and further reading. Also available on CD-ROM.

**Construction Site Safety Auditing System (SA01)**. Aimed at employers in small and medium-sized businesses, this publication covers all the key areas of on-site health, safety and welfare auditing. Pre-printed forms enable audits to be carried out efficiently with a minimum need for writing. Includes a CD ROM for downloading and printing additional audit forms.

### Construction Site Safety: Tool Box Talks (GT700)

This publication contains 69 individual training topics, designed for delivery by supervisors at informal training sessions. All topics include questions to be asked by the supervisor and a prompt for the supervisor to ask trainees if they have any questions. Contained in a pocket-sized spring binder, all pages are laminated for durability.

### Useful Reading

**Health and Safety in Construction**  
HSE Books, 1996, ISBN 0 71776 1143 4  
(Tel: 01787 881165)

Basic information on a range of common construction activities and the use of basic tools and equipment. It is written with smaller companies in mind and has a range of illustrations.

**Work Sector Guidance for Designers**  
CIRIA, 1997. Report 166. ISBN 0 86017 464 6  
(Tel: 020 7222 8891)

This document is designed to enlighten designers about the hazards of construction operations on site and what they can do in practical terms to reduce risk. It may be particularly helpful to those who may be remote from the practicalities of site work. It contains a substantial amount of information and is a valuable reference document.

**Construction Safety Handbook**  
by K.Tomasin and V Davies (2nd edition) Thomas Telford Ltd. ISBN 0 7277 2519 X

This is broad background reading for professional audiences and provides a complete picture of the problems and difficulties of managing risks in the industry. Reference to the 2nd edition is essential as the text and illustrations have been fully revised.

**Managing Health & Safety in Construction (Design Management Regulations)**.  
HSE Books ISBN 07176 2139 1  
(Tel: 01787 881165)

This publication contains the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and guidance on the duties set out in CDM.

### Acknowledgements

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