HSE
Health & Safety Executive

Construction health and safety checklist

Construction Sheet No 17 (revised)

This checklist identifies some of the hazards most commonly found on construction sites. The questions it asks are intended to help you decide whether your site is a safe and healthy place to work. **It is not an exhaustive list**. More detailed information can be found in HSG150 *Health and safety in construction* and other HSE publications.

Safe places of work

- Can everyone reach their place of work safely, eg are roads, gangways, passageways, passenger hoists, staircases, ladders and scaffolds in good condition?
- Are there guard rails or equivalent protection to stop falls from open edges on scaffolds, mobile elevating work platforms, buildings, gangways, excavations, etc?
- Are holes and openings securely guard railed, provided with an equivalent standard of edge protection or provided with fixed, clearly marked covers to prevent falls?
- Are structures stable, adequately braced and not overloaded?
- Are all working areas and walkways level and free from obstructions such as stored material and waste?
- Is the site tidy, and are materials stored safely?
- Are there proper arrangements for collecting and disposing of waste materials?
- Is the work adequately lit? Is sufficient additional lighting provided when work is carried on after dark or inside buildings?

Scaffolds

- Are scaffolds erected, altered and dismantled by competent persons?
- Is there safe access to the scaffold platform?
- Are all uprights provided with base plates (and, where necessary, timber sole plates) or prevented in some other way from slipping or sinking?
- Are all the uprights, ledgers, braces and struts in position?
- Is the scaffold secured to the building or structure in enough places to prevent collapse?
- Are there adequate guard rails and toe boards or an equivalent standard of protection at every edge from which a person could fall 2 m or more?
- Where guard rails and toe boards or similar are used:
  - are the toe boards at least 150 mm in height?
  - is the upper guard rail positioned at a height of at least 910 mm above the work area?
  - are additional precautions, eg intermediate guard rails or brick guards in place to ensure that there is no unprotected gap of more than 470 mm between the toe board and upper guard rail?
- 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?
- Has the scaffold been designed and constructed to cope with the materials stored on it and are these distributed evenly?
- Does a competent person inspect the scaffold regularly, eg at least once a week; always after it has been substantially altered, damaged and following extreme weather?
- Are the results of inspections recorded?

Powered access equipment

- Has the equipment been erected by a competent person?
- Is fixed equipment, eg mast climbers, rigidly connected to the structure against which it is operating?
- Does the working platform have adequate guard rails and toe boards or other barriers to prevent people and materials falling off?
- Have precautions been taken to prevent people being struck by the moving platform, projections from the building or falling materials, eg barrier or fence around the base?
- Are the operators trained and competent?
- Is the power supply isolated and the equipment secured at the end of the working day?

Ladders

- Are ladders the right means of access for the job?
- Are all ladders in good condition?
- Are they 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 or climb over obstacles to work?
- Does the ladder rest against a solid surface and not on fragile or insecure materials?

Roof work

- Are there enough barriers and is there other edge protection to stop people or materials falling from roofs?
- Do the roof battens provide safe hand and foot holds? If not, are crawling ladders or boards provided and used?
- During industrial roofing, are precautions taken to stop people falling from the leading edge of the roof or from fragile or partially fixed sheets which could give way?
- Are suitable barriers, guard rails or covers, etc provided where people pass or work near fragile material such as asbestos cement sheets and roof lights?
- Are crawling boards provided where work on fragile materials cannot be avoided?
- Are people excluded from the area below the roof work? If this is not possible, have additional precautions been taken to stop debris falling onto them?

Excavations

- Is an adequate supply of timber, trench sheets, props or other supporting material made available before excavation work begins?
- Is this material strong enough to support the sides?
- Is a safe method used for putting in the support, ie one that does not rely on people working within an unsupported trench?
- If the sides of the excavation are sloped back or battered, is the angle of batter sufficient to prevent collapse?
- Is there safe access to the excavation, eg by a sufficiently long, secured ladder?
- Are there guard rails or other equivalent protection to stop people falling in?
- Are properly secured stop blocks provided to prevent tipping vehicles falling in?
- Does the excavation affect the stability of neighbouring structures?
- Are materials, spoil or plant stored away from the edge of the excavation in order to reduce the likelihood of a collapse of the side?
- Is the excavation inspected by a competent person at the start of every shift; and after any accidental collapse or event likely to have affected its stability?

Manual handling

- Has the risk of manual handling injuries been assessed?
- Are hoists, telehandlers, wheel-barrows and other plant or equipment used so that manual lifting and handling of heavy objects is kept to a minimum?
- Are materials such as cement ordered in 25 kg bags?
- Can the handling of heavy blocks be avoided?

Hoists

- Is the hoist protected by a substantial enclosure to prevent someone from being struck by any moving part of the hoist or falling down the hoistway?
- Are gates provided at all landings, including ground level?
- Are the gates kept shut except when the platform is at the landing?
- Are the controls arranged so that the hoist can be operated from one position only?
- Is the hoist operator trained and competent?
- Is the hoist's safe working load clearly marked?
- If the hoist is for materials only, is there a warning notice on the platform or cage to stop people riding on it?
- Is the hoist inspected weekly, and thoroughly examined every six months by a competent person?
- Are the results of inspection recorded?

Cranes and lifting appliances

- Is the crane on a firm level base?
- Are the safe working loads and corresponding radii known and considered before any lifting begins?

- If the crane has a capacity of more than 1 tonne, does it have an automatic safe load indicator that is maintained and inspected weekly?
- Are all operators trained and competent?
- Has the banksman/slinger been trained to give signals and to attach loads correctly?
- Do the operator and banksman find out the weight and centre of gravity of the load before trying to lift it?
- Are cranes inspected weekly, and thoroughly examined every 14 months by a competent person?
- Are the results of inspections and examinations recorded?
- Does the crane have a current test certificate?

Plant and machinery

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

Traffic and vehicles

- Have separate pedestrian, vehicle access points and routes around the site been provided? If not, are vehicles and pedestrians kept separate wherever possible?
- Have one-way systems or turning points been provided to minimise the need for reversing?
- Where vehicles have to reverse, are they controlled by properly trained banksmen?
- Are vehicles maintained; do the steering, handbrake and footbrake work properly?
- Have drivers received proper training?
- Are vehicles securely loaded?
- Are passengers prevented from riding in dangerous positions?

Fire and emergencies

General

- Have emergency procedures been developed, eg evacuating the site in case of fire or rescue from a confined space?
- Are people on site aware of the procedures?
- Is there a means of raising the alarm and does it work?
- Are there adequate escape routes and are these kept clear?

Fire

- Is the quantity of flammable material on site kept to a minimum?
- Are there proper storage areas for flammable liquids and gases, eg LPG and acetylene?
- Are containers and cylinders returned to these stores at the end of the shift?
- If liquids are transferred from their original containers are the new containers suitable for flammable materials?
- Is smoking banned in areas where gases or flammable liquids are stored and used? Are other ignition sources also prohibited?
- Are gas cylinders and associated equipment in good condition?
- When gas cylinders are not in use, are the valves fully closed?
- Are cylinders stored outside?
- Are adequate bins or skips provided for storing waste?
- Is flammable and combustible waste removed regularly?
- Are the right number and type of fire extinguishers available and accessible?

Hazardous substances

- Have all harmful materials, eg asbestos, lead, solvents, paints etc been identified?
- Have the risks to everyone who might be exposed to these substances been assessed?
- Have precautions been identified and put in place, eg is protective equipment provided and used; are workers and others who are not protected kept away from exposure?

Noise

- Are breakers and other plant or machinery fitted with silencers?
- Are barriers erected to reduce the spread of noise?
- Is work sequenced to minimise the number of people exposed to noise?
- Are others not involved in the work kept away?

- Is suitable hearing protection provided and worn in noisy areas?

Welfare

- Have suitable and sufficient numbers of toilets been provided and are they kept clean?
- Are there clean wash basins, warm water, soap and towels?
- Is suitable clothing provided for those who have to work in wet, dirty or otherwise adverse conditions?
- Are there facilities for changing, drying and storing clothes?
- Is drinking water provided?
- Is there a site hut or other accommodation where workers can sit, make tea and prepare food?
- Is there adequate first aid provision?
- Are welfare facilities easily and safely accessible to all who need to use them?

Protective clothing

- Has adequate personal protective equipment, eg hard hats, safety boots, gloves, goggles, and dust masks been provided?
- Is the equipment in good condition and worn by all who need it?

Electricity

- Is the supply voltage for tools and equipment the lowest necessary for the job (could battery operated tools and reduced voltage systems, eg 110 V, or even lower in wet conditions, be used)?
- Where mains voltage has to be used, are trip devices, eg residual current devices (RCDs) provided for all equipment?
- Are RCDs protected from damage, dust and dampness and checked daily by users?
- Are cables and leads protected from damage by sheathing, protective enclosures or by positioning away from causes of damage?
- Are all connections to the system properly made and are suitable plugs used?
- Is there an appropriate system of user checks, formal visual examinations by site managers and combined inspection and test by competent persons for all tools and equipment?
- Are scaffolders, roofers, etc, or cranes or other plant, working near or under overhead lines? Has the electricity supply been turned off, or have other precautions, such as ‘goal posts’ or taped markers been provided to prevent them contacting the lines?
- Have underground electricity cables been located (with a cable locator and cable plans), marked, and precautions for safe digging been taken?

Protecting the public

- Are the public fenced off or otherwise protected from the work?
- When work has stopped for the day:
  - are the gates secured?
  - is the perimeter fencing secure and undamaged?
  - 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?

Reference

HSG150: *Health and safety in construction* HSE Books 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1143 4

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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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