

CONSTRUCTION FORUM – FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Overview

The Construction Forum brings together key stakeholders within the construction sector with the objective of identifying areas of voluntary action by the industry to drive up health and safety standards.

As representatives from within the sector, we are all agreed that:

- the recent increase in the number of fatal accidents in the construction industry is completely unacceptable;
- the provision of a safe, healthy working environment is an absolute priority for Government, the construction industry and the trades unions;
- the primary role for ensuring health and safety lies with those who create risks;
- the important role of inspection and enforcement by HSE;
- the way forward is for all stakeholders to develop a greater understanding of health and safety issues and to work together through consultation and full engagement on the basis of mutual respect.

We note the results from projects where the client has made health and safety a top priority and agree that we should work towards the approach taken on these projects.

We agree that we must respect the communities in which we work and that projects are managed in a way that ensures the health and safety of members of the public.

In particular we agree that everyone:

- has a right to a safe, healthy workplace;
- has the right to be heard and to influence their working conditions and that sites involving trades unions deliver high health and safety standards;
- has the right to return home safely at the end of the day;
- has a responsibility to work safely and take action in relation to unsafe acts
- must work to bring about the behavioural change necessary to protect the industry's workers and others who may be harmed.

We recognise the value of the safeguards established by the Employment Relations Acts 1999 and 2004 in instilling both safeguards for construction workers, and confidence to raise workplace concerns without fear of discrimination.

Translating Commitment into Action

We all agree that the Strategic Forum Health and Safety Task Group should consider how the commitment to reducing construction deaths demonstrated by those attending the Forum meeting can be translated into tangible action. It will drive forward the agenda where consensus exists for immediate action and will take forward further urgent discussions where agreement has not yet been reached.

The Task Group will provide an initial report on progress to HMG by the end of the year.

Key Agenda Items for the Task Group

The key areas for consideration:

- sharing best practice; Good practice in managing health and safety should be identified and disseminated to the right people in an accessible format.
- raising levels of competence; Raising levels of individual and corporate competence not only leads to business and performance improvement, but also improved health and safety.
- encouraging worker involvement; Behavioural and cultural change turns on the way employers and others engage with and consult the people they manage.
- Closer working; The entire supply chain from clients, their suppliers and advisers through to those who work on site must be engaged in bringing about behavioural change in the industry.
- The impact of the informal economy and false employment status; potential impact on health and safety of those who are not legitimately working.

Sharing Best Practice

What contribution can be made by:

- working together to agree standards of health and safety to be achieved on housebuilding and domestic repair/refurbishment projects;
- making greater use of benchmarking including with those in other industries;
- ensuring that all sites have agreed logistics plans.

Raising Levels of Competence

What contribution can be made:

- encouraging all site workers in the housebuilding sector to carry a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card to be able to demonstrate their occupational and health and safety competence to the same or better standard;
- larger contractors extending their training and health and safety expertise to smaller contractors, especially those in the domestic repair/refurbishment sector;
- ensuring all workers receive induction training before they start work on a new site.

Encouraging Worker Involvement

What contribution can be made by:

- reviewing arrangements for trades union or worker involvement on sites to ensure that the benefits of effective worker engagement are realised in the provision of resources and the setting of realistic targets;
- trades union and other appointed health and safety representatives working in partnership with all involved in a project;
- ensuring that all projects include trades union or other worker representatives ;
- ensuring relevant health and safety messages in an accessible format are posted on all sites.

Integrated Working

What contribution can be made by:

- The involvement of all parties including, where appropriate, trades unions from an early stage in the planning and development of a project allows for a high level of commitment on standards not only on health and safety but for welfare provision, training and education.
- ensuring that cross industry bodies that represent the entire supply chain also seek to include those from the house-building and domestic repair/refurbishment sectors;
- providing a blueprint for successful working and guidance on how it can be achieved;
- ensuring that site specific planning and induction is provided to all those in control of tower crane erection, operation and dismantling, with an emphasis on appropriate risk assessment.
- a fully integrated supply chain with a legitimately employed workforce, including where they are directly employed, as a way of ensuring full engagement of the workforce in health and safety.

The impact of the informal economy

What contribution can be made by:

- Moving towards the eradication of the informal economy in construction.

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