

| HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE                       |  |                    |            |
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| CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CONIAC) |  |                    |            |
| <b>Meeting date:</b>                              | 3 March 2010                                       | <b>FOI status:</b> | Fully open |
| <b>Type of paper:</b>                             | Above-the-line                                     | <b>Exemptions:</b> | None       |
| <b>TRIM reference:</b>                            | 2010/93252   | <b>Paper No:</b>   | M1/2010/4  |
| <b>Cleared by:</b>                                | Philip White, Chair of CONIAC, on 22 February 2010 |                    |            |

## Proposals for future work on falls from height from the CONIAC Safety Working Group

### A paper by Joy Jones, Chair of CONIAC Safety Working Group

#### Purpose of the paper

To seek a decision from CONIAC on recommendations for future work

1. This paper reports on the conclusions of the Safety Working Group (SWG) about actions needed to reduce fatal and serious accidents from falls. The paper seeks the direction of CONIAC for future work.

#### Background

2. In line with its 2009/10 plan of work the SWG has considered whether sufficient is being done to address work at height. In order to do this it formed a small sub group which reported to the SWG on 27 January. In line with governance arrangements SWG is now seeking a response from CONIAC to its recommendations.

#### Argument

3. Details of the work which has been undertaken and conclusions and recommendations are set out in the **Annex** to this paper.

#### Action

4. CONIAC to consider the recommendation (at paragraph 8 of the **Annex**) and advise accordingly.

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## Report on Work at Height by the CONIAC Safety Working Group

### Background

1. One of the objectives in the CONIAC Safety Working Group 2009/10 plan of work was to improve operation of the group to give more weight to delivery and less to information sharing. The group set up a small task and finish sub group to consider what further action could be taken to reduce falls from height.

### Work Undertaken

2. The first meeting of the task and finish group took place on 5 November and it reported to the Safety Working Group on 27 January.

3. The group considered statistics for falls accidents in construction and summaries of fatal construction falls over last 10 years. It also considered information from HSE's refurbishment inspection initiatives and human factors analysis of fatal accidents. The review was to identify trends and challenge assumptions and beliefs rather than undertake detailed statistical analysis. The purpose was to identify what action might be taken to reduce such accidents.

4. The following key features were identified:

- the proportion of deaths from falls as opposed to other causes has increased this year;
- over the ten-year period the following groups and activities dominated (but not necessarily together, for example, not necessarily electricians in domestic premises) -
  - domestic roof level work (facias, guttering, painting etc),
  - roof repairs (most noticeably fragile surfaces),
  - electricians,
  - plumbers,
  - smaller/shorter duration construction jobs.

5. The group concluded that there was no obvious area which could be tackled to bring about a dramatic reduction in accidents and that the problem was essentially in shorter duration work involving tradesmen in micro businesses, ie hard to reach groups.

6. The group discussed in detail the possible reasons why effective precautions were not taken. These included lack of appreciation of risk, not knowing how to make work safe, insufficient time to take precautions such as erecting access equipment and prohibitive cost of precautions. The group began to break down these reasons and identify a number of means of addressing them. The analysis carried out so far requires further development.

7. The group concluded that a longer term sustained campaign to hit this

ill-defined target audience with simple messages about precautions which could and should be taken and the potentially devastating consequences of accidents may be appropriate. Such a campaign would be specific to construction, and linked to but different from HSE's Shattered Lives campaign.

### **Recommendations**

8. The following recommendation is made to CONIAC:
- The SWG should proceed to develop plans for a multi-year work at height in construction campaign. The development process should include preparation of a suitable business case and all necessary consultation within HSE.
  - Key features of the campaign to be considered may include some or all of the following:
    - it would be underpinned by an assessment of the reasons for not taking precautions and of practical means to address these;
    - it would include core simple messages and supporting materials, particularly focusing on the provision of practical advice on how to get things right;
    - it would target workers particularly;
    - it would include work within the education and training system;
    - it would be supported by HSE inspectors through both promotion and enforcement.

### **Action**

9. If CONIAC supports the recommendation, the SWG will prepare proposals for a campaign and thereafter revert to CONIAC for further guidance.