

SITE SAFE NEWS

NOV 2003

SITE SAFE NEWS 6



BLITZES STOP SITEWORK

Over a third of construction sites were well below standard during September's inspection blitz on falls from height, safety inspectors found. The September inspections followed a similar blitz in June, when work was stopped at almost a quarter of construction sites because falls from height risks were not being properly managed.

The two inspection initiatives were part of 'Don't Fall For It', a Europe-wide campaign to reduce falls from height in construction. In Great Britain alone, inspectors visited a total of 2875 construction sites, to make sure that where work at height was planned or taking place, the risks were being properly controlled.

In September, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors visited 1429 sites around the country, and 332 prohibition and 82 improvement notices were served. Thirteen potential prosecutions are also being considered. The campaign during June, which resulted in 332 prohibition notices and 75 improvement notices, focused on smaller sites and contractors. Over 85 per cent of the premises visited had fewer than 20 employees on site.

HSE's Head of Construction Sector, Mike Cosman, said: 'This was a disappointing outcome after all the effort HSE and other industry players had put into promoting the Don't Fall for It message. I can't help feeling that there are significant parts of the construction industry who are prepared to tolerate unsafe methods of work because they can't be bothered to change their traditional ways of working.'

On a more positive note, Mr Cosman added: 'Despite the disappointing overall results, I'm glad to day that inspectors reported improvements when they re-visited in September sites targeted during the June blitz.'



Five of the worst (from top clockwise) An accident waiting to happen, how not to work at height, an unsafe work platform, scaffolding resting on bricks, an unsafe support for scaffolding.



CONSTRUCTION DEATHS DOWN IN 2002/03 – But warning signs this year

There were 71* fatal accidents in construction last year (2002/03), the second lowest figure recorded. This is a fall from 80 fatalities in 2001/02 and 105 fatalities in 2000/01.

Kevin Myers, Chief Inspector for Construction, said the number of fatalities in 2002/03 showed that through concerted effort by the industry, it is possible to reduce the rate and number of worker fatalities.

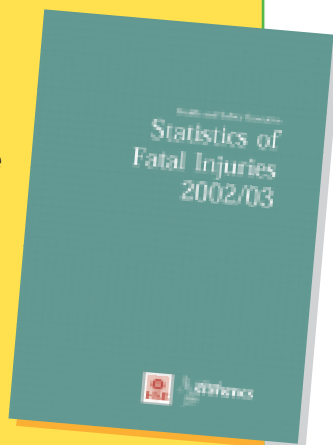
Mr Myers said: 'Every fatality is one too many, most are preventable, each a tragedy for those affected. However, it is encouraging to see a further reduction in the number of people killed while at work in the construction industry during 2002/03, compared with previous years. This reduction demonstrates that, despite the hazardous nature of much construction work, it is possible to manage the risks and to reduce the number of fatal injuries to construction workers.'

'But the reduction of fatalities in 2002/03 has so far not been carried forward into the current year. There were 27 deaths associated with the construction industry reported to HSE in the first three months of this reporting year, which started in April.'

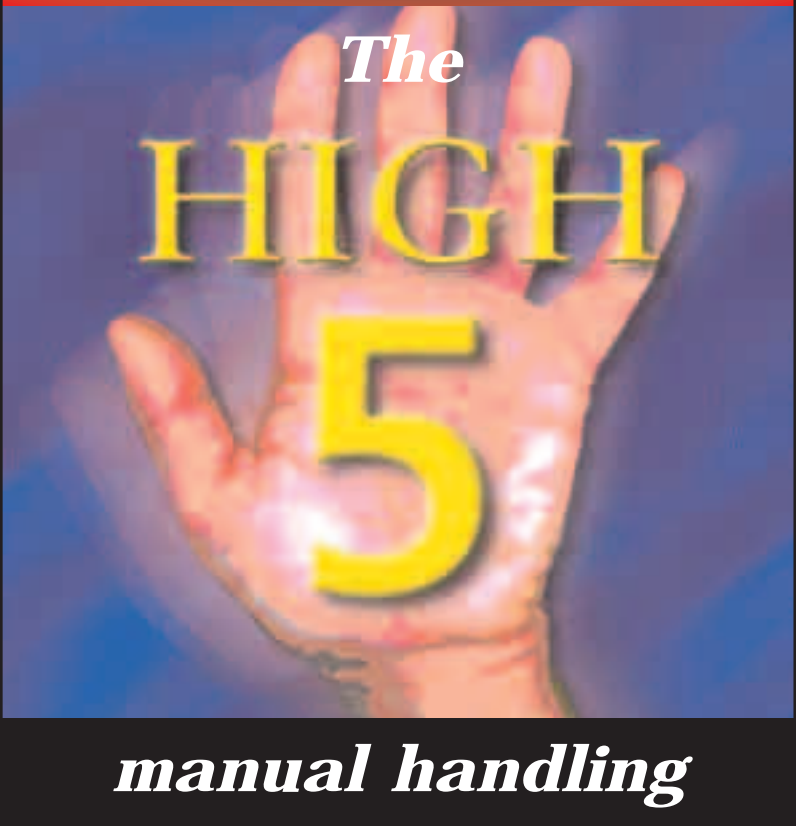
'It is too early to assess whether the recent deaths indicate a reversal of the overall downwards trend in the last three years. However the early figures for the current year should act as a warning against complacency and a stark reminder that a sustained effort is required across and down the industry over a long period to drive the necessary cultural change. That was the commitment made by the industry at the Health and Safety Summit in 2001 as part of a 10 year plan. Two years on, we should not take our eye off the ball because we have identified what needs to be done – continued effort is required within this fragmented industry to make it happen.'

Copies of *Statistics of Fatal Injuries 2002/03* are free and can be ordered from HSE
Tel: 0151 951 3864/4600,
Fax: 0152 951 3827. It is also available online at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/fatI0203pdf>.

* Provisional figure



FOCUS ON



May's issue of *Site safe news* listed the High 5 priority areas for site safety. Just to remind you, they are:

High 1. *The Basics: Tidy sites and decent welfare*

High 2. *Falls from height*

High 3. *Manual handling*

High 4. *Asbestos*

High 5. *Transport*



In this issue we're focusing on High 3 - manual handling.

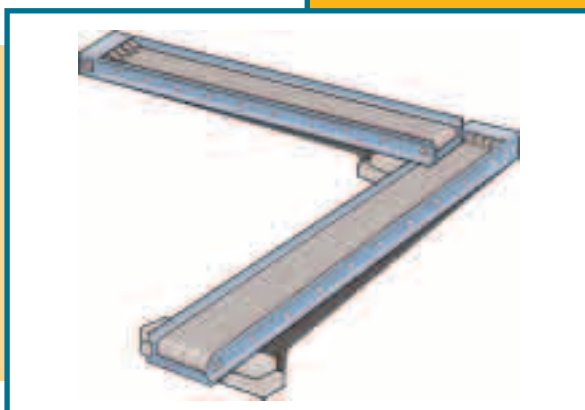
Construction work, by its very nature, involves many manual handling activities, which often contribute to musculoskeletal injuries, especially to the lower back. Manual handling risks can be reduced through better planning, control and management.

Manual handling is the major source of injury to construction workers. Every year, one-third of all construction industry accidents reported to HSE involve manual handling. These represent only a part of the actual problem, as many back injuries go unreported. Many construction workers experience symptoms of pain, aching and discomfort affecting their back, knees, neck and shoulders. These symptoms can be closely related to the type of manual handling activity; for example, work involving stooping and kneeling can lead to pain in the lower back and knees, while working with the arms raised above shoulder height can result in neck and shoulder pain. In each case long-term disability can result. If you suffer back pain, consult your doctor about treatment and rehabilitation to help you get back to work quickly.

Many of the solutions for manual handling risks are simple, cost-effective measures which can be easily developed through co-operation between designers and contractors.

So:

- use mechanical means, eg hoists, teleporters, and chutes rather than hods;
- choose equipment suitable for the job and keep it maintained;
- change to lighter materials, bags, etc;
- avoid repetitive handling; and
- avoid awkward movements.



Using a conveyor belt is another solution

Manual handling - *The good, the bad and the ugly*

the good

Kerb laying by the traditional method puts a great deal of strain on the lower back and leg joints. There are several methods which can greatly decrease the chances of both immediate and subsequent ill health. The use of a vacuum lifting device is but one.

The use of mechanical aids in manual handling:

- improves your health;
- increases productivity; and
- decreases costs.



the good

the bad

An example of poor design by stipulating the use of 210mm (9") dense concrete blocks weighing about 36kg each. Over 90% of blocks available on the market weigh less than 20kg and are generally available to cover all normal specifications.

The inspector visiting this site stopped work and served an Improvement Notice on the design practice to train their designers to identify, eliminate or control hazards in their design. The site manager rectified the immediate problem by sending the blocks back to the supplier and having him halve them! Afterwards, the site manager commented that the bricklayers were much happier and the wall went up much faster even though they had twice as many to lay.



the bad

the ugly

A manual handling, work at height, nightmare!

One simple way to improve loading out a roof would be to use a hoist to move materials safely (see illustration below).

In constricted small sites where the use of machines is difficult and could be particularly dangerous, the addition of a conveyor belt would greatly reduce manual handling and help to keep the site clean & tidy.



the ugly



An inclined hoist in operation

Case Study

In London, an inspector visited the demolition of a multi-storey office block where, due to planning considerations, the concrete skeleton of the building was to be incorporated into the new office block. As the building could not support the added weight of

skid-steer machines, demolition labourers were using wheelbarrows to move the rubble and tipping it down an open lift shaft. The visiting inspector served a Prohibition Notice on the unguarded open lift shaft edge and an Improvement Notice on manual handling. The Site Manager guarded the lift shaft and installed a conveyor belt to take materials directly to the shaft. This easy remedy:

- removed a serious falling risk;
- decreased chance of ill health from musculoskeletal disorders; and
- decreased cost by increased productivity

Why not use this page of *Site safe news* as a poster to put up in your site office?



Have *you* been consulted about health & safety on site?

Involving the whole workforce is essential in tackling the high accident rate in the construction industry. Besides compliance with the regulations, research has found that workplaces with safety representatives and joint safety committees have significantly better accident records than those with no consultation mechanism, and they record up to 50% fewer injuries.

Key messages:

- companies that engage, communicate and inform have fewer accidents and fewer lost days;
- workers should be consulted; and
- the law requires it.

On every project, it is the workers on site who are most at risk of injury and whose first-hand involvement with the work gives them the opportunity to contribute much to improving health and safety standards.

A team approach to health and safety can also be promoted by actively involving people in managing the hazards associated with their work. This is particularly so when developing new systems or processes and when looking at new equipment. Team working assists in identifying the best solution and avoiding expensive mistakes.

Make sure that your site is as healthy and safe as it can be by taking an active part ensuring that risks to your health and safety are well and truly controlled.

For more information on worker consultation please refer to the following HSE publications:

Consulting employees on health and safety: A guide to the law Leaflet INDG232 HSE Books 1996 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1615 0)

Safety representatives and safety committees L87 (Third edition) HSE Books 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1220 1
A guide to the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations



Manual handling publications

Manual handling assessment charts (MACs)

The MAC tool has been developed to help the user identify high-risk workplace manual handling activities.

The tool can be used to assess the risks posed by lifting, carrying and team manual handling activities. It is designed to help you understand, interpret and categorise the level of risk of various known factors associated with manual handling activities.

The MAC tool is available online at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/mac/index.htm>

Alternatively, single copies of the leaflet, *Manual handling assessment charts* INDG383, are available free from HSE Books.

Further reading

Backs for the future: Safe manual handling in construction HSG149 HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 1122 1

Getting to grips with manual handling: A short guide for employers Leaflet INDG143(rev1) HSE Books 2000 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1754 8)

More on the High 5...

If you want to tackle the High 5 issues head on, pick up a copy of HSE's free leaflet *The High 5 - Five ways to reduce risk on site* INDG384. This new publication has been produced to tie in with the Working Well Together campaign, and is supported by the construction industry, trade unions and HSE. It is aimed at those in charge of small construction sites and the people who work on them. It gives concise, practical advice for each of the five issues, explaining how risks can be reduced. *The High 5 - Five ways to reduce risk on site* is available free from HSE Books or can be downloaded from <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>



Court news

Decorative Specialists Ltd were fined a total of £15 000 and ordered to pay £1070 in costs, following a prosecution over an incident where a worker fell from height and sustained head injuries. The incident occurred on 11 October 2002 when he was undertaking painting and minor repair work.

Bryan Blackmore, employed by Decorative Specialists Ltd as Project Manager and Safety Advisor, fell almost three metres while attempting to climb from an unsecured ladder onto a scaffold platform. He landed face down with the ladder underneath him, sustaining head injuries that have impaired the cognitive functioning of his brain.

Decorative Specialists Ltd pleaded guilty to breaching three separate regulations of the Construction (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996 (CHSW Regs) at the London Magistrates Court on Wednesday 4 June 2003.

Contractors reminded to keep sites safe from children

Following the death of a two-year-old boy at a construction site in Leicester in the summer, HSE has issued a reminder to contractors that it is their responsibility to keep children off sites and to store materials and plant safely.

Mike Cosman, head of HSE's Construction Sector said: 'The tragic death of the two-year-old boy should serve as a sobering reminder to all of us that construction sites are dangerous places for children.'

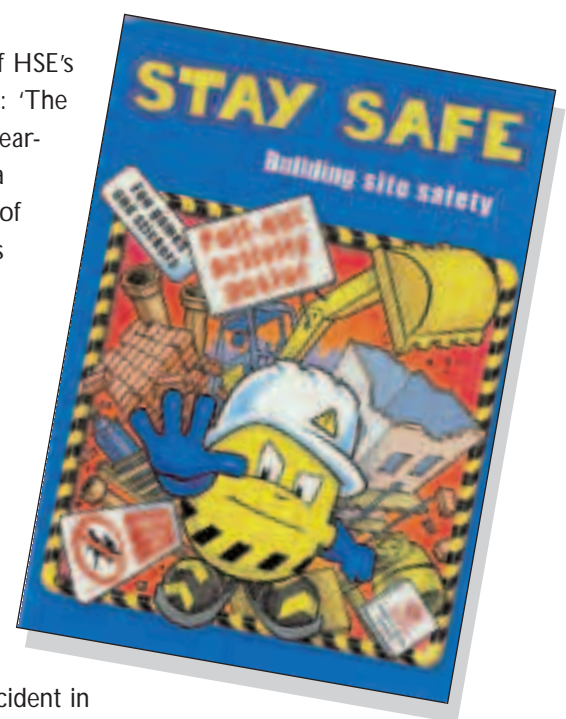
In the last five years 530 children have been injured on construction sites in Great Britain. In this case it is believed that the child was crushed by concrete retaining wall slabs.

HSE is investigating the incident in conjunction with local police.

Stay safe - Building site safety, published by HSE and aimed at children, contains games, cartoons and puzzles to encourage children to think about the hazards on and around construction sites, and how to avoid them.

HSE has also published *Protecting the public - your next move* which provides guidance to assist contractors in identifying the main risks and provides advice on how to eliminate the hazards and control risks to members of the public.

Protecting the public - your next move HSG151 priced £7.95 and *Stay safe - Building site safety* MISC447 are available from HSE Books and bookshops. *Stay safe - Building site safety* is also available online at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/misc447.pdf>



Diary

19/11/03

Launch of *Health and safety statistics highlights 2002/03* (MISC623, available from HSE Books)

Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs)

03/03/04 Birmingham (Edgebaston Cricket Ground)

10/03/04 Inverness (venue to be confirmed)

24/03/04 Teesside (venue to be confirmed)

Designer Awareness Days (DADs)

24/11/03 Haydock (design risk assessment workshop, Haydock racecourse)

25/11/03 Durham (venue to be confirmed)

04/02/04 Wakefield (National Coal Mining Museum)

05/02/04 Glasgow (in conjunction with RIAS, venue to be confirmed)



A live demonstration of an easy to erect 'system' scaffold at the SHAD held at Haydock earlier this year



Thumbs up: Well pleased and contented SHAD goes give the thumbs up at the Beverley SHAD

For more information on SHADS and DADS call Tim Shambrook
Tel: 01782 602353 E-mail: tim.shambrook@hse.gsi.gov.uk

Others

09/02/04 - 13/02/04

Designer blitz in Staffordshire, Shropshire, Hereford and Worcester

For more information call Principal Inspector, Joy Jones

Tel: 01905 743600 E-mail: joy.area12jones@hse.gsi.gov.uk

16/03/04

NW Construction Safety Group Conference, Runcorn

For more information contact Jane Stephens

E-mail: janes@healthandsafetyclick.net

The 2003 WWT Health and Safety Roadshow

On 1 September, with a snip of safety tape, Des Browne MP, Minister for Work, launched the 2003 Working Well Together Roadshow. The launch took place at a Mace project for the Royal Bank of Scotland in Gogarburn, Edinburgh.

The Minister was joined on site by Pam Waldron, HSE's Construction Division Head of Operations for Scotland and North West England.

The 2003 Roadshow featured the High 5 Campaign through a fully interactive walk through display trailer. Workers learnt more about the High 5, could listen to sound bites demonstrating the effects of not wearing hearing protection, view an HSE video showing the real effects of not working safely, try on safety harness suits supplied by Safesite and take part in a health and safety quiz.

Thanks to the co-operation and enthusiasm from Mace and Laing O'Rourke management, 550 site workers visited on the first day, getting the 2003 Roadshow off to a flying start.

Over the following five weeks, the Roadshow visited 23 construction sites throughout the country, from Edinburgh to Exeter, promoting key health and safety messages and was visited by more than 10 000 site workers.



Minister Des Browne with HSE's Pam Waldron at the launch of the Working Well Together Roadshow.

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Letters and items of interest for SITE SAFE NEWS should be sent to The Editor, SITE SAFE NEWS, Health & Safety Executive, Room 308, Daniel House, Trinity Road, Bootle, Merseyside L20 3TW. Please note we do not carry product information.

Health and Safety queries can be answered by HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG Tel: 08701 545500 e-mail: hseinformationservices@natbrit.com HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk

Worker Safety Advisors - *Pilot success*

Site safe news is glad to report that the Worker Safety Advisors (WSAs) pilot was a great success. The HSE pilot was completed earlier this year and involved safety representatives providing advice and support for workers and smaller employers in various parts of the country.

HSC has agreed to continue developing the WSA approach. HSE is now facing the challenges that this presents and is currently drawing up a step-by-step plan to answer questions like: Who are the WSAs? Where will they come from? How will they be paid? Which sectors do

we begin with? And who will run the WSA approach and how? These are difficult questions, but whatever is agreed, HSC wants WSAs to live up to the success of the pilot and go from strength to strength.

HSE would also like to say a big thank you to the Federation of Master Builders for making sure that construction workers were given the opportunity to get involved.

For more information on WSAs contact Matthew Holder
Tel: 020 7717 6977 E-mail: matthew.holder@hse.gsi.gov.uk

