

# Barriers and fencing

## Workplace transport site safety information sheet WPT07

This information will be useful to anyone who uses workplace transport or who works where it is used. It will help employers, managers and supervisors to assess their workplace and make improvements. The checklists will help you to prepare your risk assessment.

Fences and barriers are used for various jobs, such as to channel pedestrians and vehicles into or away from certain areas. They are used to keep people away from vehicles, to keep trespassers out and to increase site safety.

There are several types of fence that may be useful on your site. Some types of fence are designed for use with livestock (including electric, rabbit and stock control fencing), for noise control or for security, and temporary fencing can be useful to surround a construction site or to cordon off a certain site feature. Make sure that you are aware of all the types of fencing.

## Common problems

**No fences:** One main problem is sites not having fences in places that should be fenced.

**Damage:** If fences are broken or easy to climb over then people will be able to take short cuts, which could lead them through areas that are dangerous for pedestrians and into places where drivers are not expecting to find them.

**Wrong type:** If you are using a fence, think about whether it is the correct type of fence or barrier for the job. For example, a wooden fence may be easy to climb over.

**Wrong place:** Think about where to put your fences and barriers on site. If a small fence blocks off a route that people would otherwise take as a short cut, some of them will climb the fence to take the most direct route. People climbing fences can lead to damage and accidents.

**Gates:** Gates that are meant to be locked will create safety hazards if they are accidentally left unlocked.

**Temporary fencing used instead of permanent fencing:** Temporary fencing can be useful to surround a construction



Photo Jackie Stevens

site or to cordon off a certain site feature – but don't forget that problems can arise when temporary fencing is used instead of a proper permanent fence as a temporary fence will not be as sturdy.

### Checklist – what to look out for

- No fences.
- Broken or vandalised fencing leading to people taking dangerous shortcuts.
- Fencing or barriers of the wrong type.
- Fencing or barriers in the wrong place.
- Gates or barriers left unlocked.
- Full use of fencing not explored, ie noise screens not considered.
- Temporary fencing left in place for too long.

## How can you deal with common problems?

Make sure that:

- the correct type of fencing is used;
- the fence or barrier is in the correct location, and takes account of the layout and operation of your site; and
- fences and barriers are well maintained and damage is repaired quickly.

If pedestrians must stay out of a certain area, you could fit steel security fencing instead of an ordinary wooden fence which is easy to climb over.

Make sure that your fences are in sensible places and that people can see why the fence is there. Try to make sure barriers channel people along 'desire lines' (direct routes that pedestrians naturally want to follow to get from A to B).

**Make sure areas are well lit:** There are other things you might want to think about to go with your fences and barriers. Lighting can be important – it can make sure that barriers can be easily seen at night and can also increase site security.

**Keep lifting barriers in good working order:** Lifting barriers are often used at car park entrances. If you have these you will need to keep them in good working order. They can become locked in the up or down position so that they will not move, or they can become erratic so that they will not operate properly, which can lead to accidents.

**Using gates effectively:** You will need to have gates at sensible points along your fences and barriers. It will depend on your site whether the gates just channel people into the right entrance and exit points, or whether they are used for security purposes. If they are used for security purposes, think about whether you need to keep them locked or supervised by authorised people.

### Checklist

- Make sure you have all the fences you need to make your site safe and secure.
- Keep fences in good order and mend damage immediately.
- Make sure you have the right type of fence for the job and it is in the right place.
- Make sure the fence is sited to safeguard and channel both pedestrians and vehicles.
- Be vigilant about keeping gates manned and locked where appropriate.
- Think about what else you might need (eg lights) to accompany security fencing.

## Checking your site

Carry out a visual inspection of your site to look for problems with fencing. Walk around the premises and make notes and take photographs of any problems. In particular where fencing is positioned and what type of fencing it is. Mark the fencing and any problem areas on a site plan.

Walk round your premises and:

- check that fences and barriers are complete and in good condition – look for signs of people climbing over them, or damage from vehicles having bumped into them; and

- check barriers that separate vehicles and pedestrians. Think about any areas where additional fences or a different type of fence would increase security.

Consider inspecting the site at different times of the day, and in different weather conditions.

The plan and photographs can be used as a reference when you are back in your office and you are assessing the whole area. Be especially aware of areas where you have noticed damage to fencing as this could indicate problems with where it is located. Look at existing fences and barriers on your site, and assess how effective they are and whether they should be extended or improved. Consider whether you should be using other types of fencing and any additional measures such as lighting.

It might be useful to go through the safety checklist in *Workplace transport safety: An employers' guide*.

### Checklist

- Walk round your site, take photographs and watch how the site operates and how fences and barriers play a part in safety.
- Ask staff to report broken fences and barriers immediately then get them mended quickly.
- Watch for any unauthorised pathways which are being used.
- Watch for people (eg staff, visitors or intruders) climbing over fences or gates to take shortcuts.

## Where to get help

If you have a problem with fencing on your site, you might be able to fix it yourself, eg mend a post and rail fence. If you are unsure, speak to your health and safety workplace representative or contact HSE for advice. It may be more cost effective to have a professional assess your site and carry out the work, eg installing security fencing or noise reduction fencing.

You can also get advice by speaking to other similar local businesses – look for examples of good practice. Contact your local trade association or Chamber of Commerce for recommended local suppliers or look in the *Yellow Pages*.

### Checklist

- Can you fix the problem yourself or do you need professional help?
- Do you need specialist fencing (eg noise reduction fencing or security fencing)?

## What might it cost?

- 1.6 m high post and rail wooden fencing – approximately £200 per 10 m length.
- 1.8 m high close boarded fencing including panels and end posts – approximately £300 per 10 m length.
- 2.5 m high galvanised steel security fencing – approximately £800 per 10 m length.

(Above estimated costs are for materials only.)

## Find out more

*Management of health and safety at work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L21* (Second edition) HSE Books 2000 ISBN 978 0 7176 2488 1

*Workplace transport safety: An overview* Leaflet INDG199(rev1) HSE Books 2005 (single copy free or priced packs of 5 ISBN 978 0 7176 2821 6)  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg199.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg199.pdf)

*Workplace transport safety: An employers' guide* HSG136 (Second edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 978 0 7176 6154 1

BS 6180:1999 *Barriers in and about buildings. Code of practice* British Standards Institution

## Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/). You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

British Standards can be obtained in PDF or hard copy formats from BSI: <http://shop.bsigroup.com> or by contacting BSI Customer Services for hard copies only  
 Tel: 020 8996 9001 email: [cservices@bsigroup.com](mailto:cservices@bsigroup.com).

**This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.**

This document is available at:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wpt07.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wpt07.pdf).

© *Crown copyright* If you wish to reuse this information visit [www.hse.gov.uk/copyright.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/copyright.htm) for details. First published 11/09. Please acknowledge the source as HSE.