

Report of qualitative research amongst 'hard to reach' small construction site operators

Prepared by **Corr Willbourn**
for the Health and Safety Executive 2009

Report of qualitative research amongst 'hard to reach' small construction site operators

Corr Willbourn
Research and Development
150 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8SB

Since 2000 there has been a significant reduction in fatal accidents and other injuries in the construction industry. This reduction has been attributed in part to the focus of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on influencing large firms. In order to encourage the continuation of this downward trend, the HSE's Small Sites Project was established to bring about the adoption of sensible risk management strategies to improve standards of health and safety on Small Sites. There is a specific focus on those sites with 5 or fewer employees on site.

This research was commissioned to inform the development of a strategy to reach and influence Small Site operators.

The overarching research objective was to reveal more about how the Small Sites sector of the industry operates and the intermediaries and the factors which influence those who control small sites in order to inform a programme of positively influencing behaviour on Small Sites.

This report and the work it describes were funded by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Its contents, including any opinions and/or conclusions expressed, are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect HSE policy.

© Crown copyright 2009

First published 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to:
Licensing Division, Her Majesty's Stationery Office,
St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ
or by e-mail to hmsolicensing@cabernet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

CONTENTS

	Executive Summary	v
	Project Background	v
	Key Findings	vi
1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Research Objectives	1
2	Methodology	3
2.1	Method	3
	2.1.1 Format	3
	2.1.2 Interview	3
2.2	Sample	3
	2.2.1 Sample Frame	4
	2.2.2 Recruitment Criteria	4
2.3	Personnel	4
2.4	Timing	4
3	Main Findings and Analysis	5
3.1	The Context	5
	3.1.1 Recession	5
	3.1.2 Respondents' Projects	5
	3.1.3 Activities on Site	6
	3.1.4 Our Respondents' Workers	7
	3.1.5 Organisation on Site	7
	3.1.6 Safety on Site	7
3.2	Our Respondents	8
	3.2.1 Character	8
	3.2.2 Typology	8
3.3	Motivation, Influences and Pressures	11
	3.3.1 Motivation	11
	3.3.2 Historical Influences	11
	3.3.3 Pressures	12
3.4	Perceptions of Risk	12

3.4.1	Accidents	12
3.4.2	Comparison of Dangers on Big and Small Sites	13
3.4.3	Beliefs about attitudes to Risk	14
3.4.4	Safety and compliance	14
3.5	Assessment of Risk	16
3.5.1	Informal synthesis	16
3.5.2	Risk Assessments	17
3.6	Attitudes to Health and Safety	17
3.6.1	Statements about Health and Safety	17
3.6.2	How do people learn about safe working practices?	18
3.6.3	How do people learn about Health and Safety protocols?	19
3.6.4	What are attitudes to Health and Safety protocols?	19
3.6.5	Comparison of regulations on Big and Small Sites	20
3.7	Mitigation of Risk	21
3.8	The Illustrations	22
3.9	Barriers to adoption of good H&S Practice	23
3.10	Media and Influencing Small Site Operators	24
3.10.1	Media Consumption	24
3.10.2	Influencing Small Site Operators	24
3.11	Different 'World Views'	25
3.12	Possible Messaging	26
3.12.1	Comments on Messaging	26
3.12.2	Potential Channels	27
3.12.3	Potential Strategies	27
3.12.4	Illustrations of potential routes	28

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Discussion Guide	29
Appendix 2	Stimulus Material	33
Appendix 3	Recruitment Questionnaire	35
Appendix 4	Typology of Property Developers	41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

Since 2000 there has been a significant reduction in fatal accidents and other injuries in the construction industry. This reduction has been attributed in part to the focus of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on influencing large firms. In order to encourage the continuation of this downward trend, the HSE's Small Sites Project was established to bring about the adoption of sensible risk management strategies to improve standards of health and safety on Small Sites. There is a specific focus on those sites with 5 or fewer employees on site. This research was commissioned to inform the development of a strategy to reach and influence Small Site operators.

The overarching research objective was to reveal more about how the Small Sites sector of the industry operates and the intermediaries and the factors which influence those who control small sites in order to inform a programme of positively influencing behaviour on Small Sites.

Key Findings

Context

All respondents believe that construction sites have become safer places to work over the last fifteen years. Most respondents believe that further improvement on small sites is not an urgent matter as they believe them to be safe enough. The current recession is having a considerable impact on the industry, although builders with strong local reputations who specialize in extensions are at present still thriving.

Typology

A three-fold typology was identified. "Duckers and Divers": these are people running smaller operations, and keeping costs down. They are reluctant to spend money on safety and do not always feel they have authority to insist their workers wear PPE. However they do have some basics in place - steel toe-capped boots when working outside and a first aid kit in the van.

"Confident Captains": these are more authoritative characters, usually working with a bigger budget and a more stable team. They establish their own version of good working practice and enforce it.

"Ex Big Site Conformists": these people have held positions of responsibility on larger sites and transfer many, but not all, of their working practices to smaller sites. They are typically running larger small sites.

Perceptions, Assessment and Mitigation of Risk

Respondents believe that construction sites cannot be risk free. At each site they typically assess risk by means of a context-specific informal synthesis of many criteria which include the nature and perception of the hazard, the task in hand, estimated duration of task, area of work (outside / inside / on roof), the weather, the proximity of road / public / children, the agent (self or other), past experience (including of health and safety), hearsay of others' experiences and current personal state of mind.

Risk is mitigated according to another synthesis of criteria including the time required, the cost, availability of PPE or other equipment, degree of inconvenience, visibility of the site and the closeness of the end of the job.

Messaging

This audience is not actively seeking messages about health and safety so it will be necessary to make messaging impactful to achieve cut-through. Many respondents believed that gruesome visual illustrations would catch the attention.

Respondents listen to, and learn from, peers with years of experience in the construction industry. They are less willing to listen to messages from the HSE which is often seen as unrealistic and inflexible. Our respondents believed that the HSE are always saying

Make it safer!

But most believe that a safer message is

Remember, it's dangerous!

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Since 2000 there has been a significant reduction in fatal accidents and other injuries in construction industry. This reduction has been attributed in part to the focus of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on influencing large firms. In order to encourage the continuation of this downward trend, the HSE's Small Sites Project was established to bring about the adoption of sensible risk management strategies to improve standards of health and safety on Small Sites. There is a specific focus on those sites with 5 or fewer employees on site. This research was commissioned to inform the development of a strategy to reach and influence Small Site operators.

1.2 Research Objectives

The overarching research objective was to reveal more about how the Small Sites sector of the industry operates and the intermediaries and the factors which influence those who control small sites in order to inform a programme of positively influencing behaviour on Small Sites.

The research objectives were further articulated as follows:

- What activities are taking place on Small Sites?
- What perceptions of risk do Small Site operators have and how are they related to the activities they are undertaking?
- What is the range of attitudes to health and safety (H&S)?
- To what do Small Site operators pay attention?
- What influences Small Site operators?
- What are the key motivators of this audience?
- What are the key pressures on this audience?
- What causes this audience to adopt good H&S practice?
- What are the barriers to adopting good H&S practice?
- What are the optimal means of communicating good H&S practice to this audience?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Method

2.1.1 Format

Almost all the interviews took place off site, typically at a recruiter's home or a modest, local hotel. Respondents were given an incentive for the interview. Interviews lasted for one hour. Interviews were recorded. All notes and transcriptions were anonymised in accordance with the code of conduct of the Market Research Society.

2.1.2 Interview

The interview was guided by the Discussion Guide (see Appendix 1) which was drawn up to ensure that all the research objectives were addressed during the discussion. The exact sequence of topics varied with each interview as the researcher utilised the respondent's answers to progress the conversation.

The topic of health and safety was not raised by the interviewer until after discussion of the current site, influences, attitudes and messaging, although notes were made of when it was raised spontaneously by the respondent. The fact that the HSE was the client for whom the research was being conducted was usually mentioned during the subsequent discussion overtly focussed on health and safety.

2.2 Sample

Corr Willbourn used their in-house network of recruiters across the UK to find active sites and arrange one-to-one depth interviews with the person in charge of qualifying sites. Respondents were recruited from a range of domestic, commercial, retail and industrial small sites. The recruitment questionnaire is attached at Appendix 3

2.2.1 Sample Frame

35 One-hour interviews were convened as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of interviews

	England	Scotland	Wales
Urban	8	4	2
Suburban	10	2	2
Rural	3	2	2

2.2.2 Recruitment Criteria

Recruitment criteria were as follows:

- The respondent was whomsoever was identified by the question, *'Who is in charge on this site?'*
- In 31 cases, the number of workers on the site was five or fewer
- In 4 cases there were between five and fifteen people working on site
- Individuals working alone were excluded
- Single trade activities (e.g. window replacement, kitchen or bathroom installation) were excluded
- There were no gender or ethnicity quotas but recruitment was inclusive of gender and ethnic diversity.

2.3 Personnel

Interviews were conducted by Hugh Willbourn, David Corr, Margaret Meyer and Sam Surl.

2.4 Timing

Fieldwork was carried out from 26th January to 9th February 2009. The initial presentation of findings to the HSE took place on 19th February 2009.

3. MAIN FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 The Context

3.1.1 Recession

Almost all respondents spontaneously mentioned that the recession has had a large impact on their businesses. Those most affected were businesses which had grown and had until recently been working on large new-build sites. These respondents are employing far fewer people than a year ago. Many now found themselves doing very much smaller projects such as domestic house extensions.

“Because no one is moving.”

Few respondents have many jobs booked in.

“It used to be ‘When can you start?’ - now it’s ‘How much do you charge?’”

“It’s getting tough.”

“It’s a nightmare. The work has dried right up.”

The minority of respondents who still had a full schedule of work ahead were typically smaller builders who had been doing domestic extensions for many years and had a strong local reputation built up by word of mouth. A few of the smaller businesses had recently agreed to do jobs such as bathroom or kitchen fitting which they would have turned down a year ago as not worthwhile.

3.1.2 Respondent's Projects

Our respondents were working on a wide range of projects. The most common projects were domestic extensions, however there were a good number of other types of work, as below:

- **Domestic and Developments**

Demolishment, Apartment Blocks, New builds - individual or several at once, Restoration, Refurbishment, Extensions - one and two stories, Annexes, Barn conversions, Cladding and refurbishing pre-fabs, Loft conversions, House to apartment conversions.

- **Industrial**

New manufacturing units, Showrooms, Remodelling laboratory

- **Commercial**

New Community Centre, Factory maintenance, Refurbishments for landlords, Caravan park

- **Retail**

New shops, Shop gutting and re-fitting, Refurbishment, Conversion, Extensions.

A few respondents were responsible for two different sites and divided their time each day between both sites.

3.1.3 Activities on Site

Respondents were carrying out all sorts of activities on site from demolition to finishing. These included total demolition of existing structures and partial demolition including removal of supporting walls. Site preparation activities included digging out concrete, re-routing power cables, cantilevering over cable routes, digging footings for buildings up to 16 metres in height and asbestos removal from buildings for conversion. Building work included everything from footings to roofing using brick work, blockwork, concrete, steel joists and roofing timbers. All elements of first and second fits were represented including plumbing, joinery, electrical, finishing, snagging and decoration.

3.1.4 Our Respondents' Workers

Respondents typically used the same small group of workers and sub-contractors over and over again.

"We tend to stay with who we know. Having good quality workers on site is 100% important."

A few directly employed one or two tradesmen or labourers. The majority contracted them on a self-employed basis. Many tradesmen were employed on a meterage or price-for-job basis.

If the usual team of tradesmen or labourers were not available they would seek recommendations from them or from other contacts in the trade. It would be very rare indeed to use an unknown tradesman on a small project. Many respondents did tell stories of trialling or employing strangers, but without exception all these stories were from occasions on which they were running larger sites.

Respondents valued their network of contacts highly and took pride in their ability to call on competent, reliable workers.

"I've got 20 numbers in this phone."

Respondents also valued the relationships of trust and support which they had built up with their team and reported that it contributed towards the willingness of their sub-contractors to meet the requirements of their schedules and to the smooth running of the site.

"If you use the same lads they might not be the cheapest but they do a good quality of work and ... they're reliable, you can ring them up and if you're passing a lot of work on to them they'll bend over a bit for you ... and help you out."

3.1.5 Organisation on Site

On small sites there is very, very little formal or documented organisation. Our respondents typically work with the same people over and over again, so they feel that the procedures for getting the job done, working safely together and maintaining a tidy site do not need to be spelled out on every site.

"Everyone knows what needs to be done."

For most, organisation is 'common sense' - that is what they judge from experience to be required.

"You put to the job what you actually think it needs."

The respondent plans the order in which jobs have to be done, but nearly always the tradespeople who are contracted in already know the necessary order and procedures. It is the respondents' responsibility to ensure that the materials are there in time, and the trades are booked in at the right time.

3.1.6 Safety on Site

All respondents made it clear that safety on site was a very important concern. In fact, safety was mentioned spontaneously early in the vast majority of interviews as a key ingredient of a good site. The essential elements of safety were tidiness, common sense and appropriate protection, clothing and shoes. However, again for almost all respondents, it was not something that was a frequent topic of discussion or organisation on site because the team with which they worked was more or less the same on job after job.

"I trust the boys - I've worked with them for years."

"You don't need to tell them what to - they know the regs."

On the rare occasions when new workers or sub-contractors are used they are typically given a shift in which to prove themselves. The respondent will walk round and show them what's needed and will then give them a task and let them get on with it.

"You can't be there all the time - you've got to do your own work."

If at the end of the shift they have worked tidily and safely and done a good job in reasonable time they will be kept on.

On the larger small sites (with between six and fifteen workers) some respondents would conduct a formal induction. Other larger employers who may have two or three small sites running simultaneously conduct an induction to company procedures at head office when a new worker first joins them. Other respondents reported that when they had in the recent past run slightly larger sites they would give a short talk if a larger gang was coming on to site.

“You tell the lads, ‘Watch yourself, watch where you step, abide by the rules. If you get hurt, you’ll get no wage - and that will hurt.”

Most of the stories about difficulties with workers came from big sites where longer term personal relationships had not been established. In those circumstances some respondents felt that telling tradesmen how you wished them to do their job could be problematic.

“For some of them, that’s fighting talk.”

Equally, on a big project you need manpower and often more men than you knew personally. Therefore a balance had to be struck between the working practices the respondent preferred and those which sub-contractors might have.

“If you are too strict, no one will want to stay working with you.”

With unknown workers the unexpected can occur.

“On this job I had a guy who had a fight on the site - and he left that morning and didn't come back. That's very unusual. In the past 20 years I haven't had a fight on site.”

3.2 Our Respondents

3.2.1 Character

Our respondents were usually physically robust with a firm handshake. In temperament they were confident, entrepreneurial, self-sufficient, independent and solution-focussed. They were clearly accustomed to decision-making and leadership and took pride in their work. There was a good deal of consistency in their opinions right across the sample and we heard very similar words and phrases in many different places.

3.2.2 Typology

Notwithstanding those characteristics which all respondents had in common, we were able to identify a typology with three clear classes.

3.2.2.1 Duckers and Divers (DD)

These respondents typically were working on smaller, quicker jobs. They would take on jobs as small as fitting a window or a bathroom. Their largest jobs were building domestic extensions. A good deal of their dealings were cash-in-hand and there were indications that a few respondents - and several potential respondents who declined to be interviewed - were less than completely candid in their dealings with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. On the occasions when they needed an extra pair of hands Duckers and Divers seemed more willing to employ people they had not worked with before including immigrant or migrant workers. Some of them, from ethnic minorities, used networks within their own ethnic sub-cultures to recruit labourers and tradesmen.

This group did use stock phrases about health and safety, but it appeared that for some there was more lip service than compliance. Nevertheless they were all aware of the need to have a first aid kit in the van.

"We've got hard hats and high vis and dust masks and stuff like that but the things you would use them for vary."

This sub-group were the hardest to reach, and during recruitment we found many who declined to be interviewed.

3.2.2.2 Confident Captains (CC)

These respondents often started with a trade but chose to learn more about other trades and, in time to start their own business. They relish having their own business with both the rewards and the responsibilities it brings.

"I prefer to be my own boss."

It was very clear however that the business was not all about money but rather about satisfaction and pride in the job. Many had chosen not to expand beyond a certain size.

"I'd rather stay small. When I'm hands on I know the job's being done right."

Most were in their thirties or older and had a good deal of experience on large and small sites. Some, who used to work on, or contract to, big sites years ago, had stopped doing so not only because they preferred to be their own boss and to work with people they know, but also because they did not care for big site bureaucracy and protocol. Their interest in, and capacity for, compliance to regulations is curtailed by time and cost. However they believe they run a 'safe site' by their own lights - and they were very strict about the things they deem to matter.

"I run the job and everybody knows that it is my way or the highway."

3.2.2.3 Ex Big Site Conformists (EBSC)

Some respondents had been in positions of responsibility on larger sites and had brought the typical working practices of those sites to the smaller ones on which they were now working. Many were formerly site agents on very big sites.

"I've had a good insight into running a big site and so I've taken that and transferred it into my business."

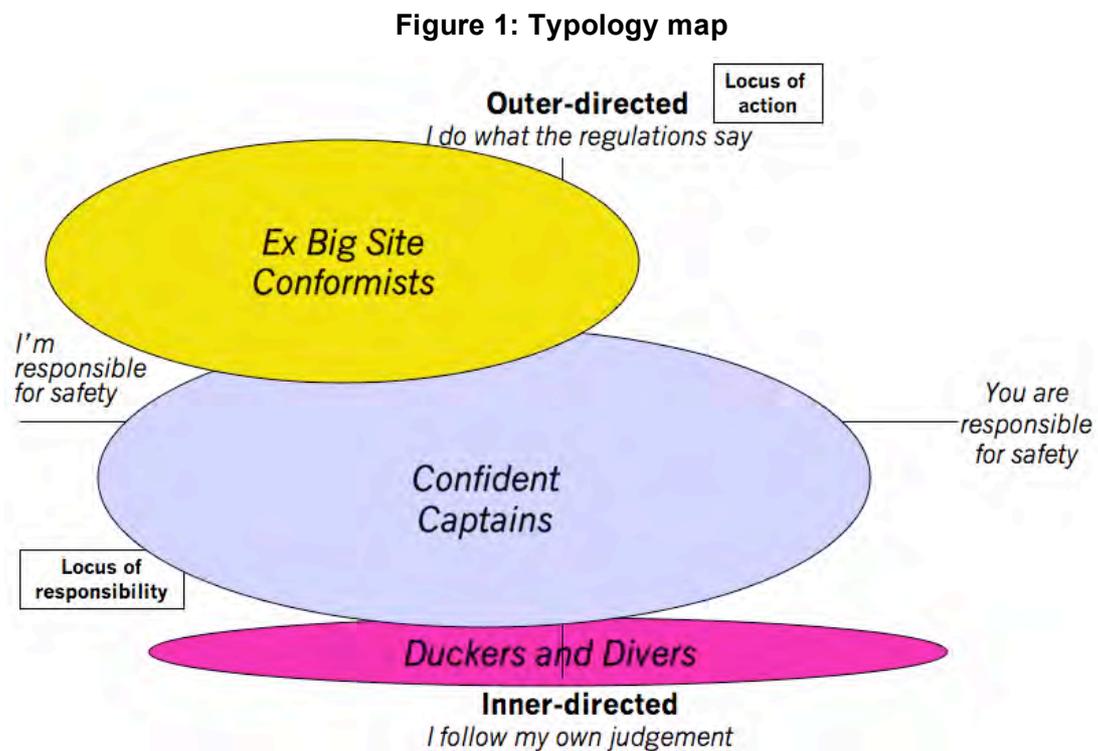
These respondents talked about doing method statements and creating paper trails. A few were using H&S consultants who visit their sites once a month to give them a score and keep them compliant. They tended to be slightly larger companies, hence more worth suing and very aware of the compensation culture.

“One of my friends summed it up really. Having spent all his life building, he recently said to me, ‘I’m no more than a clerk really, I spend all day in the office writing out safety statements’.”

Within our sample there were some sites on which were employed between 6 and 15 workers and a few sites which were one of two or more run by a single business. All of the persons in charge of these sites were Ex Big Site Conformists. Some of the respondents with 5 or fewer workers were also EBSC. They had the same mentality although they appeared to be doing less paperwork.

3.2.2.4 Mapping the Typology

We can map this typology onto two axes, [1] Inner directed (i.e. I follow my own judgement) versus outer directed (i.e. I do what the regulations says) and [2] Responsibility for safety lies with me versus responsibility for safety lying with the other.



The largest class in our sample was Confident Captains. However the relative proportions of each class are not quantitatively indicative.

The boundaries between these groups are not completely clear-cut, but the typology is stable. There may be some, limited, movement between the classes. Some DD may move upwards, given the time to go on training courses and the opportunity to win bigger contracts. Some EBSC may drift down towards CC as they take smaller and smaller jobs and their big site

experience recedes in their memory. The CC are the most stable. They are too proud to become DD and have little interest in more Big Site work.

3.2.2.5 Comparison with earlier research

We can compare these groups with the types identified in earlier work for the HSE on property developers (*Strategic Qualitative Research amongst Property Developers and Building and Refurbishment Contractors*, Corr Willbourn, April 2008). One third of the earlier sample overlapped with the later sample. See Appendix 4 for mapping of earlier sample.

3.3 Motivation, Influences and Pressures

3.3.1 Motivation

Our respondents were all positive about their work and well-motivated. Primarily they enjoyed their work, with the interest, variety and achievement it brought. They took pride in their work and enjoyed the satisfaction of achieving tangible results. Making a profit was an important driver, but it was by no means the sole or over-riding motivation. They enjoyed the independence of being their own boss and they cared about safeguarding their own good reputations.

"I like good quality of workmanship and a good name for myself. I've been on my own 5 years now and I've never advertised once. As far as I'm concerned the best advert ... is word of mouth. I get all my work from one extension to another."

3.3.2 Historical Influences

Respondents cited a number of influences on their behaviour and business practice which affected their attitudes to health and safety. Most commonly they cited significant individuals, such as a mentor in their original trade or a former boss. Some cited their apprenticeship and others their years of experience, including working on larger construction sites. A few had spent the majority of their time with other small or family builders, and they were strongly influenced by them.

Some had worked in other countries such as Germany and the Middle-East and had experience of both safe and unsafe practices.

Three or four respondents remarked that they had learned some general principles of health and safety in other trades such as working in engineering factories and motor mechanics.

3.3.2.1 Big Site Influences

The most widespread influence from big sites is simply the fact that awareness of risk and of safety is now part of day to day thinking on construction sites. Particular behaviours which have been widely carried over include

- the wearing of steel-toe capped and steel soled boots
- wearing goggles when using grinders
- keeping a first-aid kit on site
- Using 110 volt machinery.

Some practices however are specifically eschewed as un-necessary such as written method statements, wearing of hard hats unless working beneath scaffolding or roofers and the wearing of 'high-vis' jackets.

"I came back from Germany in '94 I started back to work and it was all starting to come in then. If you're in a footing in the middle of a field, the boots ... that's not a problem, but high-vis jackets and hard hats and all things like that I just didn't see the point."

3.3.2.2 Other trades

Respondents who had worked in engineering and motor mechanics had learned to think of machines as potentially dangerous and to think about how to operate them safely.

3.3.2.3 Other Influences

Respondents cited fellow workers, other contractors and further training courses as other influences over the years.

3.3.3 Pressures

The universal pressure on all small site operators is time, because time costs money. There is also pressure to control costs, however time was the most frequently cited pressure.

As the recession has deepened many respondents have noticed that their competitors are cutting prices to win jobs and they have to do so as well which puts pressure on margins.

During the building process the Building Control Officers are also a pressure. As their agreement is vital to 'sign-off' a job, all their requests must be addressed. In some cases, respondents also cited their clients as a source of pressure, and occasionally unhelpful or sensitive neighbours. Some respondents had had visits from inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive when they were working on larger sites. It was universally understood that you complied immediately with any request from an inspector because they had the power to shut down the site. However no one had had a visit from an inspector on a site with five or fewer workers.

No respondents made any mention of any contact with Health and Safety Awareness Officers, however it may be the case that respondents did not distinguish between with Health and Safety Awareness Officers and HSE inspectors.

3.4 Perceptions of Risk

3.4.1 Accidents

All respondents were aware that construction sites have many hazards such as heights, power tools and excavations. However they believed that accidents are not caused by hazards as such, they are caused by rushing, untidiness, laziness, inexperience and bad luck.

They believe that people make mistakes and occasionally things break. We heard many stories of accidents in which the respondent was involved.

"I chopped my hand clean off once."

"The nail came up through the laces of my trainer."

"I was crushed in a footing. I jumped in just to smooth it out before the concrete came in. As I stood up the side of the trench came in."

"I've had no incidents at all apart from myself where I fell off a scaffold but I was just being stupid. They took the ladder away and .. I [was] running back, ... and slid and it was missing and I just fell straight down."

There were many more stories of accidents that they had seen.

"I saw a bloke got killed: he was using an angle grinder on a step ladder. It slipped and jumped and got him on the jugular."

"There's a plumber I used to know he's only got like two fingers left and it's just bad luck, these were all at different times. I don't know how he's done them all but it makes you think how can a plumber lose a finger."

"I saw quite a few of the scaffolds collapse [in Germany]. A Polish bloke was airlifted because the scaffold collapsed on him."

"There was another boy one time was cutting through a bit of wood and put his hand underneath it ... I says, 'never put your hand across a power saw'. He put his hand under, right across - four fingers hit the floor."

3.4.2 Comparison of Danger on Big and Small Sites

Almost all the accidents described had occurred on big sites. The majority of our respondents believed that big sites are more dangerous than their own small sites.

"On a bigger site the dangers are maybe higher ... you've got more men, you've got a bigger area, you've got more machinery on site and ... you've got dumpers driving about, diggers driving about, you've got big lorries backing on to the site, delivering materials all the time."

"On large sites, you often find that things just don't get looked after. It's hard to keep on top of everybody. Look at the site next to the hotel! The entrances are so cluttered and untidy – accidents waiting to happen. You feel like the workers don't take any personal responsibility."

Some EBSC (and a few CC) with more recent big site experience believe that big sites have become considerably more safe in recent years because they now have dedicated H&S officers.

Small sites are considered safer because:

- You know and trust the people you are working with
- The size means that excavations are less deep, heights are less high
- There are no 'unknown' areas
- There is little or no traffic or heavy plant
- There are fewer people on site.

"You don't have to worry about people wandering around."

3.4.3 Beliefs about attitudes to Risk

Respondents believed that their own attitudes to risk and safety differed from those of health and safety inspectors. Respondents believed that H&S inspectors did not use personal judgement, experience or common sense but applied fixed rules to every situation regardless of context or the experience or relationship of the workers involved in the task. Hence whilst respondents described their own behaviour with a range of terms (see diagram below) they believed that for H&S inspectors things were simply right if compliant with the rules and wrong if not.

Table 2 : Respondents views of behaviour

HSE	WRONG		RIGHT	
SSO	UNSAFE	BE CAREFUL	SAFE	OTT

3.4.4 Safety and Compliance

Note that our respondents did not equate compliance with health and safety regulations with safe working practices. In the course of interviews it was possible to identify four different combinations, and at different times most of our respondents had populated all of these fields.

Table 3: Respondents views of safety and compliance

Unsafe and non-compliant	Safe and non-compliant
Unsafe and compliant	Safe and compliant

3.4.4.1 Unsafe and Non-compliant

“Sometimes you are lazy and you think of the time involved and think of the money and just use a ladder instead of putting up a tower. Sometimes it’s just not worth the time and the energy.”

“Just last week, on the current job, I nipped up and did my client a favour and stuck a cowl on the chimney ... just put a ladder up. I shouldn’t have done it but I did.”

3.4.4.2 Safe and Non-compliant

“Our scaffold doesn’t always allow for two guard rails, so we take a calculated, acceptable risk.”

“There’s no point in us wearing high-vis jackets when there’s just three of us working in somebody’s house.”

“When I’m not wearing my safety gloves, I feel like I take more care around the machines because you can see where the end of your fingers are and you feel more exposed. You’ve always got the guards up anyway. Gloves can also get in the way. I’ve known guys who have caught a glove and had their hand dragged into the blade.”

“when you’re up and down a roof you’ve got more chance of slipping in a pair of boots than you have with a pair of trainers. With trainers you can grip pretty well ... and you can feel you’ve got good footing.”

“They offered me their old scaffold because it was not compliant [with health and safety] and they could borrow it back if they need it. ... I cannot see any difference between the new one and the old one - and they’ve been built up next to each other.”

3.4.4.3 Unsafe and compliant

- PPE

“[With] a hard hat with a dust mask, goggles and something in your ears ... you lose your sense of balance and ... and your awareness of dangerous situations is impaired.”

“wearing hats if it’s 90 degrees they could be walking along the scaffold and they could pass out ... because under their hat it’s 130 degrees.”

- Unintended Consequences

“Big jobs are now costed to include forklifts instead of hod carriers. As a result ... the mechanisation has led to a more dangerous working environment.”

- Individual Error

“We had an accident when someone went through an asbestos roof. We had told them how to do it and all the right scaffold was in place, but they didn't do the job as they should have done and one of them went through the roof.”

3.4.4.4 Safe and compliant

“Obviously I always wear steel toe capped shoes or boots.”

“I make sure they always have 110 power.”

“If I do some grinding work, first thing I put on is a pair of goggles.”

“All of our scaffolding is put up by someone ticketed to do it.”

“A good clean, tidy site is also a healthy site.”

3.5 Assessment of Risk

3.5.1 Informal synthesis

Our respondents assess risk **contextually** by means of an **informal synthesis** of criteria including, but not limited to, the following:

- Nature of hazard (e.g. workers overhead, power tools)
- Perception of hazard (e.g. relative height)
- Task in hand
- Estimated duration of task
- Area of work (outside / inside / on roof)
- Weather
- Proximity of road / public / children
- Agent (self or other)
- Past experience
- Hearsay of others' experiences
- Current personal state of mind.

When assessing risks respondents scan the situation and pay attention to what their experience indicates is significant. DD and CC do not consciously run through a 'check-list', nor do they use categories or absolute measurements. They often call it 'common sense'.

"If it's blowing a gale and windy ... then you don't take any chances you know. There are probably three or four ways to do every job and it would depend on like say weather, where it is, what it is and so on - you just make the decision."

"[It's] common sense. You don't go up a ladder and start drilling holes in the wall, using both hands ... in the snow."

3.5.2 Risk Assessments

In some circumstances (mostly the 6-15 worker small sites) EBSC do consciously write risk assessments or method statements but their motivation to complete the paperwork is primarily conforming to rules and covering liabilities. Their actual risk assessment is still experientially based, like CCs.

DDs are least likely to assess risks overtly, rather they are most likely to simply integrate a 'felt-sense' of the degree of unsafety they can tolerate into their planning.

When deciding how to do a job, which includes keeping safe whilst doing it, the risk assessment process is rarely articulated, however respondents do make risk assessments, albeit not explicitly.

Nevertheless, they are perfectly aware that what they consider safe is not necessarily equivalent to compliance with H&S regulations.

3.6 Attitudes to Health and Safety

3.6.1 Statements about Health and Safety

It is worth noting that whilst several respondents commented on the importance of a comfortable shelter and good toilets to create a good atmosphere on site, there was no emphasis on occupational health as such. Language use indicates that when people used the phrase 'health and safety' they were referring primarily to safety. Indeed on occasion 'healthy' was used as a synonym for safe.

Overall, there was a grudging respect for the benefits of health and safety protocols, but plenty of irritation where they are believed to be un-necessary or impractical.

"Most health and safety stuff is there for a reason and a bloody good reason at that. As long as they don't get too ridiculous then we're fine with it."

Some Duckers and Divers evoked a sense that their talk about H&S was closer to lip service than enthusiastic compliance, nevertheless even they did know they had to have a first aid kit and PPE available.

"It is vital."

"You have to have the kit in the van."

There was a widespread awareness that behaviour on construction sites was considerably less dangerous than it was fifteen or twenty years earlier.

"No one wants to go back to the old days when people were in fear of their jobs and took risks; that's terrible. We older people can all think back to things we did and think it was stupid."

Some EBSC conduct inductions for every site they start, even though they also reported that the workers who sit through them now are very bored.

"We do an induction for every site now. Everyone is totally pissed off with it."

Some respondents said apparently contradictory things about H&S within the same interview.

"We've never been on site without hard hats, never. ... I'm not going to force you to wear your hat."

Probing revealed however that statements about H&S behaviour were nearly always context specific. So in the above case the respondent always made PPE available and always requested his workers to wear it, including hard hats, if they were working in an area in which he believed them to be at risk from falling objects. He would not however request that they wore their hard hats on top of the scaffolding where there was nothing above them.

3.6.2 How do people learn about safe working practices?

Many respondents said that they had really learned both how to master their trade and to integrate safe working practices from specific mentors - either an older tradesman or a specific manager or boss. They had also picked up learning from experience of common practice on both large and small sites. Some respondents mentioned their apprenticeships as a source of knowledge about safety.

A good number, however, felt that they really learned only from having accidents.

"I injured my back 10 years ago ... that's why I don't take risks with my blokes. I get them the right boots, I make sure the right gear's used."

"You only learn by your mistakes. You only hope your mistakes are small mistakes, not large."

"You learn from experience ... I now use a block and tackle when I'm moving steels, but I never used to.. you realise it's dangerous when things go wrong."

"The only way you can stop it, is someone having an accident and knowing what you are talking about. Everybody thinks they know what they are doing."

One or two mentioned courses, in some cases ones they had been sent on when sub-contracting to large sites.

"I did a course on H&S about 20 years ago."

3.6.3 How do people learn about Health and Safety protocols?

Respondents learned about H&S protocols from larger sites and from the inductions to larger sites.

"On big sites obviously you've got boots, hats, high visibility jackets and things like that which we don't."

Other sources of information are friends in the business and other professionals: surveyors, building control, architects. Some respondents picked up information from personnel or leaflets in hire shops and builders' merchants. Some had been on training courses.

3.6.4 What are attitudes to Health and Safety protocols?

There is a widespread perception is that HSE is rule-bound and inflexible and that whilst much of its output is sensible it was also believed to range from the blindingly obvious to the absurd. A good number did not know the detail of regulations, but nevertheless believed many to be without merit.

"There are a lot of Health & Safety rules that are complete and utter nonsense. I mean I don't know any of them particularly."

A good number feel that initial, laudable aims have now been overwhelmed by paperwork and petty detail. As a result they think the HSE is increasingly driven by an obsession with compliance not safety, by 'the blame culture' and the consequent form-filling to protect the employer from legal liability in the event of being sued, and 'jobs for the boys' as health and safety trainers and bureaucrats.

Further, some believe that more H&S regulations do not necessarily improve safety.

"We are more regulated than we were ten years ago - so if the accident statistics are rising, could it be that we are over-regulated?"

"They change these regs. They do things and they think they're for the better – but sometimes it's not – sometimes they go backwards."

Respondents felt that, particularly on large sites, the emphasis on safety that came along with the protocols had brought a welcome increase in safety.

"The real positives are how things have got better working with electrical equipment and taking care when you are working above people below."

A good deal of it was considered sensible.

"Common sense really."

At the same time, those who actually abided by the protocols felt that they generated far, far, far too much paperwork.

“On a small job you’ll have a job file about an inch thick and a health and safety file about four inches thick.”

Big site inductions were considered boring.

“The brain switches off watching videos - you’ve seen it all before.”

And for some the emphasis on assessment and recording could be counter-productive or costly.

“If you are in the office doing the paperwork you are not out there looking at the men, so if they do something stupid you’re in trouble.”

“The safety side costs us money because it slows us down. ... It maybe costs you an hour a day to make sure you’re safe.”

“It’s really about the end of a time when everyone was responsible for the space in which they were working and for the safety of those around them. ... It’s the end of common sense.”

“Personally I think it is for the worst ... the common sense element has been taken away.”

Many respondents felt a good deal of what they came across which was identified as "health and safety" lacked common sense or was impractical.

“It’s a nightmare. ... It’s written by robot people who just don’t understand.”

“[If scaffolding is blocking path] you can’t even put notices ... to suggest they cross the road because you become liable if they have an accident. How do they work that out - surely you’re still going to look before crossing the road aren’t you?”

“There are some silly things ... one hand on the ladder all the time ... If you are sensible and your ladder is secure, surely it’s ok ... how do you fit a window [with] one hand on the ladder? You can’t put scaffolding in all the time and even then you’d have to walk it up the ladder anyway. It’s just impossible.”

And for some, even learning them is time wasting.

“A three day course for two hours learning.”

3.6.5 Comparison of regulations on Big Site and Small Sites

There is a very widespread belief that the regulations are different - and less onerous - if there are fewer than five workers on site. On enquiry no one was able to cite the specific ruling which distinguished between the different sizes of sites, but the belief was nevertheless very common.

“Most of it doesn’t apply to sites with five or fewer workers.”

"Cos I only employ one person the rules are different for me."

"When you have more men on the site you have to fill a health and safety policy and you have to have your health and safety policy stuck on to the wall. I'll be honest with you I don't know how it works exactly but I think it's to do with the number of people on your site."

"On sites our size we don't have to be as concerned about health and safety as on the bigger sites, where they always have to have the right kit, it's just common sense really."

"The bigger you are, the more things you have to do. If you're under 5 or 3 then a lot of that doesn't come into it."

Respondents believed that some, but not all, of the health and safety related activity on big sites was not necessary.

"If there was a joiner in this house now putting skirting boards on they'd make him wear a hard hat."

Further, some believed that the paperwork that they had heard was necessary did not enhance safety but rather provided protection from legal redress if and when things went wrong.

"I'm not stupid enough to do things that are wrong. It's common sense. Why would you have to write it down? I feel that it's all really about covering someone's back – proving that you have done the right thing."

3.7 Mitigation of Risk

For our respondents mitigating risk is not necessarily equivalent to compliance with protocol.

"We follow the rule book as far as it is sensible to do, but not any more than that."

Compliance is perhaps the key variable in the typology.

- EBSC comply - sometimes reluctantly - because they feel visible
- CC believe first and foremost in themselves - and comply in so far as they agree with HSE or feel coerced
- DD will do as little as possible - but are avid tokenists.

The decision as to whether to mitigate or reduce risk, and if so by what means, is taken on the basis of another informal synthesis of criteria:

- The time taken
- The cost
- Availability of PPE or other equipment
- The degree of inconvenience of mitigation
- The visibility of the site
- The closeness of the end of the job.

The vast majority of risk mitigation behaviour is seen as “common sense” i.e.

- Keep the site clean and tidy

"I have to keep my sites clean. It's an obsession with me. An untidy site just isn't safe."

- Use people you know and trust
- Don't employ dangerous people

Dangerous people are hasty, untidy, disorganised or thoughtless or they have poorly maintained tools.

"I only use decent people. Stupid people without common sense, I just won't use them."

- Do it the right way
- 110v
- Remind people about hazards
- Remind the lads to wear their PPE.

Many pointed out that the, for them, awareness of danger is the key to safety.

"Be aware of your surroundings at all times and take appropriate action. If you're not aware of everything, then you're not a tradesman."

"They've got to have a certain amount of fear 'cos fear helps with common sense ... If someone is saying, 'we're going to put you in a safe environment' its 'well I don't need to think then'."

3.8 The Illustrations

Towards the end of the interviews respondents were shown some pictures illustrating good practice and poor practice (See Appendix II). The pictures were not presented as a finished document, but rather a prompts to explore whether a pictorial approach would be a useful mode of communication.

Respondents all found them to be clear and understandable but in several ways they were felt to be lacking. As each picture was taken in different locations neither the tasks nor the sites seen as comparable.

No one felt they were being shown anything new, nor anything they did not already know. For some the pictures were patronizing and many thought that the real targets would not read it.

"I know that's poor practice - I don't have to be told."

"It seems a bit condescending. I don't think that anyone who does this is not aware that it is 'bad practice'. If you are doing that then you pretty much know that it is wrong. You're

doing it for a specific reason – to save money or to save time.. If they're going to do it, then they are going to do it. "

"No disrespect to the Polish workers, but ... for them it's 100% about money ... there's a lot of blind eyes being turned."

Interestingly only the middle pair (tidy / untidy) was deemed unequivocal poor practice by everybody. A few respondents would consider the 'poor' scaffolding adequate for some short tasks.

"I wouldn't feel that bad about jumping up on that scaffold and just doing a quick repair. It depends how long I had to stay up there – it's only a few feet up anyway. Sometimes it's about 'horses for courses' and you don't have long enough to put up a tower scaffold. The problem is not so much the height, it's the number of people up there and the position of the ladder. If it was for long-term use, I wouldn't use it."

One or two respondents also felt that the 'waste bombing' picture illustrated a situation that could easily be made reasonable safe.

"That's not so bad because it's contained ... as long as you had a sign saying no entry ... you could write a risk assessment saying that was controllable. I could get the lads to do that safely."

3.9 Barriers to adoption of good H&S Practice

Whilst respondents did value and insist on their own safety standards they identified a number of 'health and safety regulations' with which they did not comply. The reasons were various:

- Discomfort

"A tall guy walking on a scaffold with a helmet you bang your head everywhere - you're cricking your neck half the time."

- Pride

"People don't like being told what to do."

- Habit

"There's no point in trying to change people who've been doing it for a long time. They're not that interested."

"No matter what you say or do to some people, they're set in their own ways and they ain't going to take any notice."

- Devolution of responsibility

"[If he fell] it's down to him 'cos we're subcontracting him so he should have his own insurances."

There appeared to be a limit to their willingness to engage with or enforce compliance beyond a certain point - again for a variety of reasons:

- It was deemed impractical to sack people for minor or intermittent infringements
- Respondents were primarily focussed on completing their projects

"When it's your own money you can't afford to sack one bloke in case you can't get another one for a week, and then you'd be holding up all the other trades."

- Some respondents were unwilling to take advice from people they don't know
- There was a fair amount of weariness with the topic
- A widespread aversion to paperwork
- Perceived cost in both time and money.

"We had one guy in to fit four Velux windows in the roof and ... and he wants scaffolding and everything up, ... whereas we've got another guy ... [who] will come, he'll knock a hole in the ceiling, he'll extend the roof and fit the Velux window so it's much more cost effective for us although it's maybe not too clever for him so obviously we use him if we can."

3.10 Media and Influencing Small Site Operators

3.10.1 Media Consumption

Our respondents were not prolific consumers of written media. They did read or come across the following

- Product catalogues
- Professional Builder
- Construction Magazine
- Association Newsletters: NHBC, Premier Guarantee
- The Sun
- Daily Mail
- Daily Mirror
- The Express.

Many listened to local radio or Talk Sport when driving.

A good number said that their first port of call if seeking information would be the internet. They did not cite specific websites but would use a search engine, typically Google, to take them to a relevant page.

3.10.2 Influencing Small Site Operators

The major current means of influence are trickledown from Big Sites, word of mouth from friends and co-workers and other tradesmen, hire shops and builders' merchants and other professionals such as surveyors, engineers and architects.

"If you start off working for a big company, they have legal issues and they have to make sure that everybody has steel toe capped boots and hard hats and stuff like that then for the rest of your working life you're just going to continue the same practice."

"Generally [I learn about H&S through] word of mouth. You speak to people or friends. Sometimes you go into a ladder shop, ladder hire. There's a leaflet or they'll say it's illegal to hire that ladder now. So instead of hiring the ladder, you're hiring scaffold. So you pick a lot of H&S that way."

Trust in the speaker - usually founded in acquaintance over a period of time - is a vital component in the credibility word of mouth. Usually, information is sought only as the need arises for a specific project goal.

Many respondents believed that the only way that compliance with regulations will be enhanced is by H&S inspectors visiting more sites. However whilst they believe 'cowboys' could do with a visit, they personally would consider it on the one hand a deterrent to some slightly risky behaviour and on the other an unnecessary hassle which would force on them costly, pointless regulation compliance.

3.11 Different 'World Views'

There is a difference of 'world view' between our respondents and the persons they believe to be drafting H&S regulations. Language which talks about eliminating risk is not perceived as realistic.

"If you show pictures like this [illustrations of good practice] it suggests that if it's all clean and tidy and you do everything by the book then everything will be all right, but that's not the case. You can never be 100% safe."

"Some of the things they come out with I think, 'Are these people in the real world?' ... sometimes I think they're trying to fight you rather than getting you to ... help yourself."

For our respondents risk is ubiquitous and they have all learned their own ways of working with it, from respectful to reckless.

"Every site could have an accident no matter how safety conscious you were."

The HSE are perceived by many to be saying:

"I know you think you are safe, but you are wrong. We know better."

Many respondents, in particular Confident Captains, in turn are saying:

"I know H&S says that, but they are wrong. I know better."

In the same vein some believe the HSE to be saying :

"Your site should be perfectly safe"

and

“If you follow the regulations you will be perfectly safe.”

But all respondents believe one neither could, nor should, ever say a site was perfectly safe.

They believe accidents will happen:

- either because of carelessness, laziness, untidiness, inexperience, etc - i.e. things that they actively seeks to prevent when running a site
- or because of momentary lapses of attention, breakages or sheer bad luck - i.e. things that nothing can actually prevent.

The following section of an interview is quoted at length to illustrate the respondent's several reactions to an accident and the perception that whilst accidents are avoidable they do not believe that they can necessarily be prevented by a third party (the respondent).

“I've seen people having accidents and it's their own fault because they didn't take care. It's my site and my responsibility. I don't want to see anybody getting hurt on my site. Sometimes it doesn't work. I'll give you an example. One of the boys was using a table saw, he was a good ... worker. He was putting facings on a door. He didn't wait for a helping hand. When he was bringing it down it split. It was too heavy, he shouldnae have done it and he cut his finger off. It was just down to carelessness, not wanting to wait, not wanting to go and get another table. I was shocked because the guy knew exactly what to do. Machines are dangerous. I don't want that to happen on my site and it did happen on my site and I wasnae happy about it at all. Laziness and carelessness disnae work. Very experienced joiner he was - a good joiner.”

Some actively resent - and reject - compliance because they believe

- It is insufficiently context-sensitive
- It is sometimes impractical
- It can breed resentment or ridicule
- It can be costly and time consuming.

However, this doesn't necessarily mean they ignore the rules, nor that they embrace recklessness, nor that they don't care for the safety of their workers

They typically make a deliberate choice about their degree of compliance based on their own assessment of the risk and of the benefits and disbenefits of compliance.

3.12 Possible Messaging

3.12.1 Comments on Messaging

Our respondents felt that photographs were more impactful than text and for many the more gruesome, the more effective.

“I had [a picture] come through the other day, ... showing a bloke who was wearing an incorrectly fitted harness. He’d fallen and it had popped his testicles right out. I showed that to the scaffolders. ... the next thing they’d done, they’d all tightened their harnesses. They had it pinned to the wall. You’ve got to shock people.”

3.12.2 Potential Channels

Our respondents were very focussed on their activities so the best channels through which to reach them will be those which are closest to the media and materials they need to use:

- Product / wholesalers’ catalogues
- Hire companies
- Product Packaging
- Site visits
- Insurance / Guarantee companies
- Building Control
- Other construction industry professionals
- Seminars / trade fairs.

3.12.3 Potential Strategies

Potentially successful strategies include:

(a) Continuing current activities

Current activities have had a positive effect on safety. On the whole respondent do not hold the HSE in high esteem, but they do pay attention to rules which are enforced with strict sanctions. The research also indicates that over time, more and more safe working practices have been integrated into site behaviour, and this may well continue.

(b) Increase site visits

Only a very few respondents were sanguine about receiving a visit from a H&S inspector, but many felt that only the threat of serious sanctions would affect the behaviour of those people they believed to be working unsafely.

(c) Run a communications campaign

An impactful, focussed communications campaign could raise awareness of specific safe practices. It was felt that such a campaign would work best if placed carefully with the trade environment, e.g. adverts in catalogues and on packaging as well as in the trade press and internet sites. It would be helpful also to build the messaging around the salient values of our respondents: close working relationships, the importance of experience, the value of tidiness the ubiquity of hazards and the dangers of rushing, over-confidence and false security.

If a campaign is run, we recommend that it avoids implying total safety is possible - even if that *is* the goal - because our respondents believe otherwise:

“One of our jobs to encourage youngsters that they mustn't assume that something is safe, although the regulations nowadays are encouraging them to think it will be safe.”

“It is impossible to have a no-accident scenario. No matter what you do there will be accidents.”

3.12.4 Illustrations of potential routes

Bringing these ideas together we offer here a few illustrations of possible communications routes. These are not intended as copy - but rather indications of possible utilization of our respondents' concerns and beliefs about what is valuable and what enhances safety.

PRIDE IN THE JOB

Visual: 2 pics: House and plaster cast

I built that house - or I broke that leg?

TEAM SPIRIT

Visual: Builder at bedside

It's better to work with your mates than visit them in hospital.

AWARENESS OF DANGER: JOB DONE

Visual: Broken batten thrown in a skip

Tom was glad he noticed the broken batten because he replaced it and finished on time. And nobody fell and broke their neck either.

GRUESOME 1: TRUE STORIES

Visual: Blood-covered circular saw blade

“This boy was ... flinging a [power] saw on the floor ... I said, ‘Watch what you’re doing’ ... he says ‘I’ve been doing this for years, I’ll never hurt myself’ ... the guard jammed, it ran right across, took every single toe off.”

GRUESOME 2: PSYCHOLOGY

Visual: Corpse on pavement

Was he thinking:

I can reach that

It's only five minutes

It won't happen to me

Let's just get the job finished,

... or was he not thinking at all?

We'll never know.

APPENDIX 1

Discussion Guide

Project Toni, Job No. 924 Discussion Guide

It should be noted that the discussion guide below informs the interview but does not determine the sequence and phrasing of the questions in a fixed manner. In order to build rapport, and further clarity and candour, utilise the flow and energy of respondents' conversation.

1 Introduction

- Can you tell me what your role is on the site
 - How did you get this role
 - Probe to discover criteria / qualifications required
- How did you get into the construction business
 - Probe to discover where they have worked in the past – in particular, to what extent (if at all) has work on larger sites influenced them

2 Current Site

- Please tell me about the site you are working on now
 - Probe to reveal project, activities, timescale
 - What is expected duration of activity
- Expand to explore and then probe overall perceptions of site
- To what extent is this typical of your work
 - What is the range of size and duration of sites undertaken
 - Probe to discover if behaviour changes with type / duration (or other variable) of site
- Who is working with you on site
 - Probe to explore perceived qualities of co-workers
 - Probe to reveal working relationships / company set-up etc
- How do you organise work on the site
 - Again probe, but do not prompt, for H&S matters
- What do you have to deal with on this site
 - Probe to reveal issues, concerns, pressures etc
 - If, and only if, H&S issues arise, explore detail and circumstances

3 Influences / Learning

- Thinking about your career now, how did you learn what you need to know to do this job
 - Probe to reveal influences and opinion-forming experiences
 - Probe to reveal sources of significant learning – e.g. courses, colleagues, incidents, study, reading etc.
 - Explore relationship (if any) to larger sites

- 4 Attitudes
- What, for you, is a ‘good’ site
 - Probe to elicit criteria of ‘goodness’
 - What are the attributes of good workers
 - Probe to explore relative values of skill, competence, training, temperament, etc
 - What is it like to work on a site like this
 - Probe for highs and lows and, indirectly, for salience of H&S
 - How does this compare to working on a large site
 - Probe for views of standards on larger sites and differences with small sites
 - Probe reasons for differences
 - Check whether views are based on experience or hearsay
- 5 Messaging
- Where do you learn about things
 - What do you read
 - What media are consumed (radio stations / TV / Print media / trade press / Internet etc)
 - What is helpful, instructive, etc.
- 6 Health and Safety
- What comes to mind when I mention “health and safety”
 - Probe to explore salience, perceived importance and any areas of interest of emotional heat
 - Allow conversation to develop according to respondent’s attitudes
 - Probe further to explore attitudes towards H&S
 - Do respondents believe they maintain good standards
 - If so, what makes them think so
 - If not, what makes them think so
 - Further, do they lack motivation or information, or is there another reason
 - What is your most important your H&S issue – and why
 - What is your top H & S tip
 - If not in construction, probe then focus on construction
 - why, and where did you learn it
 - If you had to rate your own site against others you know of in terms of H&S how would you rate it – and why
 - Could you improve H&S on your site

- Probe to explore if so, how – and why the suggested steps have not yet been taken
- How does your site compare with larger sites in terms of H&S
 - In particular, probe beliefs and attitudes about large sites
 - If they believe standards of H&S are different on large sites, why do they think this is so
- Do you receive H&S messaging
 - If so from whom
 - Have you changed your behaviour as a result of it, and if so, why
 - If no messaging received, how would H&S messaging have to be presented for you to choose to listen to it?
 - How could it make you likely to change your behaviour
- If you were in charge of H&S on Small Sites, how would you go about it
- How would you positively influence your peers

7 HSE

- What, if anything, do you know about the Health and Safety Executive
- What have you heard from them
- What do you think of what you've heard
- Is HSE useful or helpful to you
 - If so, in what ways
 - If not so, what would HSE have to be like to be useful to you

8 Messaging Indications

(SHOW STIMULUS PHOTOGRAPHS) – Attached at Appendix 2 of report

- Gather spontaneous responses
- Probe to discover – is this deemed interesting, eye-catching, useful, informative?
 - What further comment arise
- Is this a good basis for a communication
 - If so, why
 - If not, how could it be improved.

9 Closure

- Are there any further thoughts respondent wishes to contribute
- Or any comments on the interview process

Thank respondent and close.

APPENDIX 2

Stimulus Material

POOR PRACTICE



Two badly erected scaffold towers with no guardrails. Platform not fully boarded. Ladder is too short and not tied to tower.

GOOD PRACTICE



Scaffold tower with guardrails, midrails, toeboards & properly positioned outriggers.



Uneven, narrow boards create unsafe access. Several tripping hazards. Poor storage of waste prevents safe easy access. Possible risk of falling from boards.



Tidy site free from obstructions with materials stored safely. Easy to move around site and to escape in an emergency.



'Bombing' waste without a chute so debris could bounce out of skip and injure someone. Lack of safety barrier on roof means that site worker could fall – a fall of this distance likely to kill or disable.



Chute preventing debris bouncing or hitting people below.

APPENDIX 3

Recruitment Questionnaire

CORR WILLBOURN

R E S E A R C H & D E V E L O P M E N T

I50 Waterloo Road LONDON SE1 8SB

Tel: 020 7633 9957 Fax: 020 7633 9816

Job No: 924

Job name: Toni

RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Name of Participant _____

Address _____

Tel No: _____ Mobile No: _____

E-Mail _____

Date, time and location (including full postcode) of Interview

Interview No: _____

RECRUITER: PLEASE SIGN AND DATE EACH QUESTIONNAIRE

I certify that I have carried out this interview according to your instructions and that the interview was conducted face to face with the respondent who is not a relative or friend of mine:

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Recruit ONLY by calling at an active small construction site.

- The site can be commercial, domestic, retail or industrial. Please recruit a spread (see letter).
- The site must have more than one worker. The ideal site has five or fewer workers employed on the site. No more than 20% of sample may have between five and fifteen people working on the site.
- The target respondent is whoever is identified by the question, “Who is in charge on this site?” The person should be present and working on the site for at least 75% of the time. If another person, off-site, is identified either close or call the office (020 7633 9957) for clarification.

QUESTIONNAIRE SCRIPT

Good morning/afternoon. I am acting on behalf of Corr Willbourn Research, an independent market research company who have been commissioned to carry out research concerning small construction sites. We aim to involve a cross-section of people working in these fields and therefore need to ask you some questions.

Q1. Please can I talk to whoever is in charge on this site?

Identify target respondent. The person should be present and working on the site for at least 75% of the time. If another person, off-site, is identified either close or call the office (020 7633 9957 or 07956 911334) for clarification.

Q2. Have you ever taken part in or market research depth interview or group discussion?

Yes V ASK Q2 No X ASK Q4

Q3. Have you taken part in a market research depth interview or group discussion in the last 12 months? - **CLOSE IF YES. IF NO, ASK Q3**

Q4. What subjects have you been interviewed on before? **(LIST ALL)**

IF ON A SIMILAR SUBJECT AS THIS PROJECT, CLOSE INTERVIEW.

Q5. ASK ALL: READ OUT

Could you please tell me if you or any of your immediate family work now, or have worked in the past two years, in any of the following forms of employment:

Advertising		V
Market Research	X	
Journalism		0
Public Relations		1
Regulatory or supervisory bodies in the construction industry		2
None of these		3

FOR ALL INTERVIEWS ALL MUST CODE AT 3 ONLY - OTHERWISE CLOSE.

Q6. Please tell me how many people you have working on this site

Working alone	V - Close
1 – 5	X
5 – 15	0 – Check with office
16 or more	1 – Close.

Respondent should code at X.

If respondent codes at 0, call office to check if overall quota allows for recruitment.

Q7. Please tell me what sort of construction work you are carrying out on this site.

Record response _____

NOTE: Work must include some construction (e.g. building, demolition, excavation).

CLOSE if the respondent is engaged only in a single trade activity such as kitchen or bathroom installation, window replacement, aerial, soffit and fascia installation or painting and decorating. If in doubt, call the office.

Q8. ASK ALL: PLEASE RECORD GENDER OF RESPONDENT

Male V

Female X

There are no quotas on gender but please note.

Q9. ASK ALL - Could you please tell me which of these best describes your ethnic origin.

READ OUT

White British origin	V	Pakistani	3
White Other	X	Bangladeshi	4
Black-Caribbean	0	Chinese	5
Black-African	1	Other	6
Indian	2		

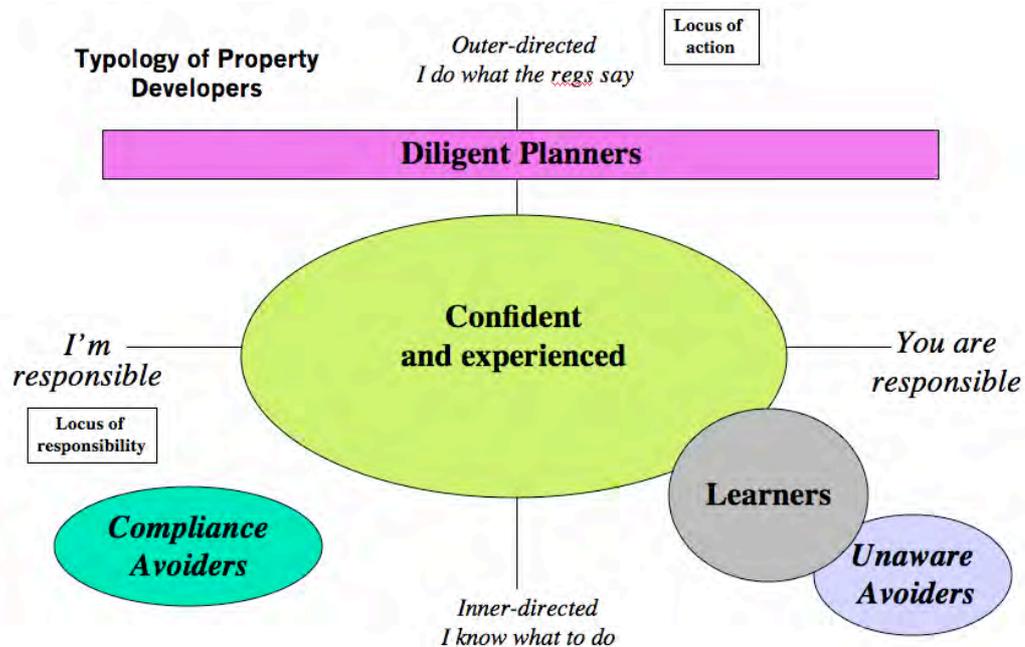
There are no quotas, but please recruit a spread representative of your local population.

CHECK AVAILABILITY AND RECRUIT.

APPENDIX 4

Typology of Property Developers

A typology was developed in earlier work for the HSE on property developers (*Strategic Qualitative Research amongst Property Developers and Building and Refurbishment Contractors*, Corr Willbourn, April 2008). This typology can be compared with the one on page 15 of this report, and it can be seen they overlap. This is to be expected as the specification for one third of the earlier sample overlapped with the later sample.



Report of qualitative research amongst 'hard to reach' small construction site operators

Since 2000 there has been a significant reduction in fatal accidents and other injuries in the construction industry. This reduction has been attributed in part to the focus of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on influencing large firms. In order to encourage the continuation of this downward trend, the HSE's Small Sites Project was established to bring about the adoption of sensible risk management strategies to improve standards of health and safety on Small Sites. There is a specific focus on those sites with 5 or fewer employees on site.

This research was commissioned to inform the development of a strategy to reach and influence Small Site operators.

The overarching research objective was to reveal more about how the Small Sites sector of the industry operates and the intermediaries and the factors which influence those who control small sites in order to inform a programme of positively influencing behaviour on Small Sites.

This report and the work it describes were funded by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Its contents, including any opinions and/or conclusions expressed, are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect HSE policy.