

# Clugston Construction

## Worker engagement case study 7

*This case study is part of a series of case studies, which give examples of best practice when engaging workers to improve health and safety in the workplace.*

### Introduction

Clugston first appointed a health and safety adviser in 1974, and health and safety issues have been high on the agenda ever since, from board level to site teams.

In 2005 Clugston's Chief Executive, John Burnett, published the company's *Purpose, values and visions*, with health and safety being:

- the number one priority;
- present in everything that Clugston does;
- vigorously pursued until the company has reached and maintained its goal of zero accidents.

Mr Burnett's challenge to the construction side of the business was to:

- encourage two-way communication over and above existing site inductions, toolbox talks and site safety committee meetings;
- make safety the number one priority by engaging the workforce in day-to-day health and safety management.

These challenges had to include everyone involved in Clugston projects, be they directly employed staff, self-employed workers or subcontractors' employees. This case study reports on some initiatives that are key to Clugston's strategy for improving health and safety standards. They were observed in action at Clugston's RAF Leconfield site.

### Take Time initiative

The *Take Time* initiative requires everyone on site to complete (either individually or as a team) a *Take Time* review form, covering observations on the working environment, work methods and all safety systems. The back of the form has space for workers to record near-miss situations they have witnessed or taken action during the day.

### Company fact file

Clugston Construction is a £150 million privately owned regional civil engineering and building contractor. With offices in Scunthorpe, Leeds, Washington, Tyne and Wear and Peterborough, Clugston undertakes projects in a range of sectors including health, education, retail, distribution, defence estates, process industries, waste and energy.

A typical site was observed at RAF Leconfield in Yorkshire, where a £7 million project is underway to provide a permanent hanger for RAF Search and Rescue helicopters. This is a steel-framed building with associated workshops, storage and accommodation facility for the pilots. On this project, the workforce is a mixture of directly employed and subcontracted employees.



Figure 1 Filling in a *Take Time* form

Completed *Take Time* forms are collated and reviewed by the site management team. All notes and near-miss reports are actioned and feedback provided to the workforce. At the end of each week, managers collate the best safety initiatives, near-miss reports or hazard observations and reward the gang who submit them with prizes ranging from lottery tickets to gift vouchers.

### Near-miss reporting

Near misses can lead managers to areas for concern and improvement, to prevent the next accident before it happens. More near misses are being reported – in 2004 the group total was 1816, and in the first six months of 2005, the total was around 1100. Cliff Scott, project manager at Leconfield, stresses that he sees this as evidence of success not failure,



Figure 2 Bricklayers Robin Richards and Steve Chilvers

that Clugston is getting to grips with a cultural issue in the industry – of persuading the workforce to honestly feedback information about site conditions to their managers.

One day early in the Leconfield project, 15 completed cards were left outside the site office, seven of these contained comments from the workforce, raising issues like the need to leave the generator running at night to dry clothes, the presence of uneven ground conditions, and a request to provide fencing in one area.

### Making safety number one in your face

Health and safety has been first on all internal meeting agendas for many years, but project teams were asked to put it first on all meeting agendas, even those chaired by client and design teams.

To achieve zero reportable accidents, Clugston started a *Safety in your face* campaign. This high-profile initiative was launched across all sites. Even after leaving a formal induction, method statement briefing, toolbox talk, or safety committee meeting, workers are constantly reminded of the importance of health and safety through banners and posters around the site.

A visitor asked a site manager: ‘who is going to read all these posters while on site?’ The site manager’s reply was: ‘well if they stayed on my computer, nobody! Now everyone has the chance because they are “in your face”.’

All senior managers carry a laminated card showing (in pictures) the standards expected on site. Managers are expected to check these standards on all site visits, and then report back to the Head Office safety committee.

### Bringing risk assessment to life

Each subcontractor carrying out work of significant risk has to go through a method statement briefing with Clugston site managers. A risk assessment/permit-to-work form is filled out, during which the subcontractor’s own method statement is assessed against the site conditions. Any additional risk control measures are identified on the form, and each



Figure 3 Site posters

operative in the subcontractor’s gang signs to say he has been briefed. This document then goes on file with the subcontractor’s method statement, as evidence that each operative has been briefed on the risks of the job.

### The results

During 2004, Clugston achieved its most successful health and safety performance to date:

- some 1816 near-miss reports were submitted by the workforce and site management teams;
- throughout 2004, no one (including subcontractors and labour-only operatives) working on site sustained a RIDDOR-reportable injury, and the company recorded its lowest number of accidents requiring first-aid treatment.

The company continues to grow and take on more work. To date in 2005, Clugston has reported six RIDDOR over-three-day incidents, but the all-accident frequency rate (including first aid-only injuries) has fallen from 4.2 per 100 000 man hours in 2004 to 2.6 in 2005, and:

- the number of near misses reported is increasing;
- the long-term trend is healthy, from 400 first-aid injuries in 1994 to 75 in 2004;
- clients are satisfied;
- tenders are being won on best value, not lowest price;
- staff turnover rate is one of the lowest in the industry;
- national awards, eg Construction News Quality in Construction Safety Award, Contract Journal Silver Helmet and ROSPA Gold Award.

‘But ...we’ve just started,’ says John Burnett. ‘Now we must continue to make sure that health and safety is our number one priority, present in all we do and vigorously pursued until we have reached and maintained our goal of zero accidents.’

Further information can be obtained from the Clugston Health and Safety Team at: [www.clugston.co.uk](http://www.clugston.co.uk).