

## Maintaining health and safety standards through the life of a contract



Information sheet from Seven steps > Step 7 > Further tools

This guidance is to help dutyholders/managers in small and medium enterprises consider how to ensure that health and safety remains a priority against a background of commercial, operational, environmental or social pressures. The change or shift in priorities is referred to as 'control drift'.

### Explaining 'control drift'?

Most enterprises will work on a contract that does not go to plan. Maybe the pressure to complete a job on time, joining a project part way through, or difficulties with sub-contractors will mean priorities change and health and safety management systems drift.

Cutting corners means more chance of an accident on site.

### Reducing the chances of 'control drift'

Early on, ideally before signing contracts, discuss with your client or client's representative the importance of health and safety. Emphasise the need to build in extra time to modify health and safety plans as the project develops.

Focus on the periods when maintaining health and safety standards could be jeopardised. Use a health and safety management system to track work at these critical periods. The *Site Measurement Aid* in Step 7 will help you monitor performance.

*The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007* require co-ordinators, architects and contractors to consider how health and safety issues can be minimised by the design process, the plan of works and the management of health and safety on site throughout the life of the project.

### Health and safety management systems

These can be as simple or as complicated as you want to make them. Remember they should help you maintain the quality of your health and safety measures on site. Most systems use the following technique:

#### PLAN, DO, CHECK, ACT

**Plan** – what health and safety controls are needed to ensure health and safety standards are maintained.

**Do** – exactly what you say, whether that is more site visits or more safety briefings.

**Check** – and evaluate whether what you have done has made a difference.

**Act** – if checks show you need to change your plan.



## Building in milestones

Identifying key milestones acts as a reminder to step back and review how well health and safety standards are observed. If you identify 'control drift' you can then take measures to bring health and safety back to the fore.

### How to identify key milestones

Think about the critical phases of your project, when health and safety standards could slip. Milestones can change as a project develops – and one point often overlooked is the last couple of months or weeks when the pressure is on to complete on time.

### Who should carry out a review?

It doesn't have to be the person managing health and safety on site. The pressure to complete on time can take over and sometimes an outsider is in a better position to ask, 'Should you be doing that?'

Choose someone whose opinion you trust and someone who can remain detached from the pressures of the business. You could consider:

- setting up a reciprocal agreement with another business;
- consulting your local construction trade association to find someone to set up an independent audit process;
- using trade union safety representatives if you have them. They are often well trained and experienced and, although employees, can still retain some independence;
- using monitors from the **Considerate Constructors Scheme** ([www.ccscheme.org.uk/](http://www.ccscheme.org.uk/)). They come from different disciplines and their purpose is to maintain health and safety standards; or
- speaking to your client. They need to be aware of their legal and moral responsibilities for health and safety on site and they should give you the time and resources to ensure health and safety remains a priority throughout the lifetime of the contract.

For further information see [www.hse.gov.uk/construction](http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction)

**The Leadership and Worker Involvement toolkit is aimed particularly at small and medium sized businesses and is designed to help improve your health and safety and bring additional benefits to your business performance and productivity.**