

Personal Safety When Visiting Construction Sites

These guidelines bring to your attention the dangers in the day to day work which employees carry out and which can be easily overlooked when visiting construction site.

The responsibility for health and safety on construction site is placed upon the building contractor under the CDM 2007 Regulations, therefore employees must comply with the rules imposed on the site by the Principle Contractor.

Before going to site ensure:

- You take your personal protective equipment.
- Ascertain any special site visiting arrangements.
- Record your whereabouts before leaving the office in the in/out register together with the approximate time of return.

On arrival at Site:

- Park your car safely and lock it – without risk to others e.g. general public highways vehicles, site vehicles and personnel.
- Announce your arrival to the contractor's representative or building owner/agent and sign the visitors book.
- Ask to have a full site induction.
- Wear your protective footwear and head protection as necessary when working on the highway, high visibility jackets , vests must be worn.
- Ask if there are any unusual dangers and be prepared to comply with any special site safety requirements i.e. security, permit to work etc. Tell the site representative what you want to inspect, this will help them advise you of any dangers.
- Always withdraw from site in the face of aggressive behaviour or suspicion of personal safety.

When on site at ground level:

- Be especially careful of moving machinery e.g. fork lift trucks, dumpers, JCB's etc
- When walking, beware of trailing cables, hosepipes, small drainage excavations over planks and boards and watch out for hidden depressions, broken glass and protruding nails.
- Be aware of wet slippery surfaces e.g. clay, overhead obstructions e.g. scaffolds.

When on site above ground level:

- Use ladders in accordance with company procedure.
- Beware of prohibition notices/scaffolds where displayed.
- Beware of those working above and below, especially when working over/adjacent to a highway. You have a duty of care to the General Public.
- Check before use all scaffolding as set out elsewhere in the safety manual.

Excavations:

- Only enter excavations when absolutely necessary.
- When entry into excavations is required, ensure there is safe access and follow inspection guidelines as set out elsewhere in the safety manual.
- Do not stand close to the edge of a trench - It may collapse under your own weight.

Lighting Operations:

- Keep clear of lifting operations ensuring that the drivers/banksmen can clearly see you.
- Beware of the space needed for crane jibs and crane overhang and derricking together with the reciprocating action of the counter weight.
- Do not distract the attention of drivers/banksmen whilst lifting operations are in progress.

Confined Spaces:

- Operations involving confined spaces should always operate a permit to work system. Never enter a confined space where other hazards may exist without appropriate protective equipment and assistance i.e. Manholes in live sewers freshly decorated internal rooms or where solvent welding adhesive has been used, roof space or other void where mineral wool fibre insulation or timber preservation is being installed.
- Where inspection of confined spaces is required, ask the site representative if there are any unusual dangers and comply with any special safety requirements imposed.

Accident Reporting:

- Report any site accidents to the site representative. On return to the office report the accident to your Manager/Responsible person. The accident/occurrence may be reportable under RIDDOR Regulations.

Excavation Safety

Excavations are dangerous places, particularly when the ground they are dug in is unstable. Employees are therefore advised not to enter excavations unless absolutely necessary.

Excavations can take many forms from trench excavations with vertical sides, trench excavations with battered sides, boreholes and tunnel.

Specialist excavations also pose special hazards like coffer drains and caissons, when deep and/or surrounded by water.

When entry into an excavation is unavoidable assess the adequacy of the trench support system; access and egress, ground conditions, construction operations and other environmental conditions.

When assessing the adequacy of a trench support system check:

- The materials/system is strong enough to support the material retained.
- It extends not less than 150mm above natural ground level.
- The shuttering is of a type, which provides adequate support for loose/friable/liquid material.
- The shuttering extends below excavation floor to prevent ground heave

Ladders should be provided to afford safe access and egress to be floor of the excavation and should be secured at the top to prevent slippage. Ladders should also meet the standard together with their proper use is set out elsewhere within the company safety manual. Ladders should also be regularly spaced apart in long trenches.

Check that the support system is appropriate to suit the ground conditions i.e. close boarded/sheet piled in running sand and loose material, whaling boards for stiff/firm ground.

Do not proceed along excavation too close to mechanical excavations or pipe laying operations or where movement adjacent the sides of the trench may cause accidental collapse traffic. Stop blocks should be used to prevent dumpers and other vehicles approach to the edges of excavations.

All deep excavations should be safely cordoned off from site vehicular and pedestrian traffic routes with appropriate signs and lighting to warn off the danger.

Beware that combustion engines sited close to excavations may give rise to the presence of toxic carbon monoxide fumes which are heavier than air and build up from the floor of excavations.

Other environmental conditions to consider are excess water in excavation floor which impedes judgement of depth of trench and condition of trench floor therefore stumps should be formed to enable pumping to take place. Ground water will also generate similar problems but in addition will make both sides and floor of the excavation unstable e.g. floors may become boggy and/or like quick sand therefore de-watering techniques may need to be employed. Sloping floors to excavations can also disorientate and unbalance persons causing nausea. Excavations dug close to structures and scaffolding may cause undermining of the structures support or impose additional loads on trench sides. Spoil heaps should be set back far enough not to impose additional loads on trench sides.

Always wear your personal protective equipment. It may save your life.