

## ***BUILDER INFONET - JULY 2007***

### ***Free information for smaller builders and contractors working on existing domestic and commercial properties***

#### **HSE inspection of smaller building projects**

HSE is looking closely at health and safety on smaller building projects. During the last twelve months almost 50 builders have died in the UK whilst carrying out repair or extension work on existing domestic or commercial properties. HSE workplace [inspection initiatives](#) are therefore taking place to raise awareness of the dangers.

[Recent visits](#) to smaller building sites found that on 20% of the sites safety precautions to prevent falls from height were so poor that work had to be stopped. The projects visited included roof repairs, roofline work, replacement windows and home extensions. The photographs at page 3 illustrate some of the conditions found. In too many cases builders were failing to use properly erected scaffolds or other safe working platforms whilst working at height.

Working at height remains the most significant risk on smaller building projects. Falls from [ladders](#), [working platforms](#), [roof edges](#) and [through fragile roofs](#) are the most frequent cause of fatal falls on smaller building sites. The precautions required are straightforward and inexpensive and there is plenty of guidance available on the [HSE website](#).

#### **Recent prosecutions and guidance on precautions**

[Fined for unsafe site](#) - a company has been fined £44,000 for failure to comply with the requirements of Improvement Notices relating to conditions on site. The case shows that all builders should be proactive in taking steps to assess and control the risks that are ever-present on building sites. If an HSE inspector serves an enforcement notice the courts take a dim view of any failure to comply with what is required. [Click here for Guidance](#)

[Fragile roofs](#) - three companies and two individuals have been fined a total of £68,000 with £40,407 costs arising from an incident in which a scaffolder died after falling through a fragile roof light. Work on fragile roofs can be carried out safely using any combination of mobile elevating platforms, safety nets and other systems of fall restraint or arrest. [Click here for Guidance](#)

[Ladder fall](#) - a builder has been fined £2,500 and ordered to pay £2,889 costs following an incident in which employee suffered head injuries after a fall into an open stairwell while ascending an unsecured ladder. [Click here for Guidance](#)

[Asbestos cement](#) - a demolition contractor has paid over £19,000 in fines and costs after asbestos cement sheets were removed in an uncontrolled manner. The sheets were smashed to the ground and then spread over the site. Guidance on such large scale demolition and dismantling work is covered in *Working with asbestos cement* HSG189/2 and is available from HSE Books 1999 ISBN 0717616673. Simpler precautions can be taken on on small-scale asbestos cement work. [Click here for Guidance](#)

#### **New ladders for old**

Every month nearly 100 people fall from a ladder at work and suffer serious injury. HSE is promoting ladder safety messages through a ['ladder exchange'](#) which aims to remove 4000 'dodgy' ladders from workplaces. Businesses have the chance to get their ladders checked and where necessary, trade them in for new ones at a discounted price. [Click here for Guidance on ladder safety](#)

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#### **CDM Regulations 2007 place an enhanced duty on building project clients**

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 ([CDM 2007](#)) came into force on Friday 6 April 2007. The regulations make it easier for duty holders to comply with the requirements as they simplify and clarify existing Regulations. A [summary of duties](#) is on the HSE website along with a list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

An important aspect of CDM 2007 is the duty on all CDM project clients who are now required to:

- Check the competence and resources of appointed contractors etc;
- Ensure that the contractor arrangements for managing the project are suitable;
- Allow sufficient time and resources for all stages of the project and;
- Provide pre-construction information to designers and contractors.

These duties apply to clients procuring services in the course or furtherance of a business. Having made initial checks before work begins the project client should conduct reviews to ensure that the arrangements which have been made are maintained. Only simple checks are required which clients should be able to carry out for themselves.

On larger projects lasting more than 30 days contractors are prohibited from working on the project unless the project client has appointed both a [CDM Coordinator and Principal Contractor](#).

#### **Recent fatal injuries involving smaller builders**

In 2007 there have been more than 20 fatal injuries on smaller building projects, both domestic and commercial. Each death is a personal tragedy for the family and friends of the deceased. These recent deaths have included:

- falls from towers and other types of scaffold (4);
- falls through fragile rooflights (3);
- falls from moveable ladders (2);
- fall from the roof of a house whilst repairing a minor roof leak (1);
- fall from a ladder resting on a tower scaffold which overturned (1);
- collapse of walls (2) and excavations (1);
- electrocution whilst working on house refurbishment (2);
- telehandler attachment striking a workman (1);
- steel section suspended from a mobile crane fell striking a workman (1);
- reversing heavy goods vehicle crushed a pedestrian (1);

I hope you find this issue of *Builder Infonet* helpful. If you have any suggestions on matters you would like addressed in future issues please let us know.

**Philip Poynter**  
**HSE Construction Division**

# Work at height on smaller building sites

These pictures show conditions found by HSE Inspectors during recent visits to smaller building projects. The standards shown are illegal, dangerous and could easily have resulted in a death at work. All the work shown could have been carried out safely from properly erected scaffolds, with roof edge protection or other precautions

**Roofline work from an unguarded staging**



**Repointing ridge tiles without scaffolding or a roof ladder**



**Reroofing a sloping roof without scaffolding**



**Replacing a flat roof without edge protection**



**Constructing a dormer with insufficient scaffolding**



**Installing a window in a roof without edge protection**

