

HEALTHY HANDLING INITIATIVE

The information in this document is provided by the HSE to assist clients, designers, planning supervisors and contractors who are currently involved in construction procurement, design and planning. The matters below should be considered by designers and included in contractor risk assessments and the project health and safety plan that is accepted by the client before work starts.

Falls from height are the major cause of fatal injury in construction. However, the handling and use of tools, materials, articles and substances can cause fractures, strains, musculo-skeletal disorders, dermatitis, cement burns, hearing loss, hand arm vibration syndrome and consequent long term disability. This initiative is intended to assist the industry in addressing these problems.

- **ORDER AND ORGANISATION - see page 2**
- **LIFTING AND CARRYING - see page 3**
- **WET CEMENT - see page 4**
- **HAND HELD VIBRATING EQUIPMENT AND TOOLS - see page 5**

The following pages contain advice on some key precautions that Inspectors will expect to find implemented where the hazards are present. These matters are a high priority and it is likely that enforcement action, including prohibiting work, will be taken on sites where effective precautions are not in place. Inspectors will also take action where clients, designers or planning supervisors have not complied with their CDM duties.

Prosecution may follow in serious cases where persons are at significant risk and legal requirements have not been met. However, by giving this advice we hope to find that such action is unnecessary.

**HEALTHY HANDLING INITIATIVE –
ADVICE FOR CLIENTS, DESIGNERS, PLANNING SUPERVISORS AND CONTRACTORS**

CONSIDER...

- untidy conditions?
- blocked ladder access?
- unsafe storage?
- tripping and slipping
- hazards?



Order and Organisation

Disorderly sites and poor organisation can result in serious injury caused by slips and trips and longer term disability arising from musculo-skeletal disorders

INSPECTORS WILL EXPECT TO FIND:

- clean, tidy and well organised sites that are kept in good order;
- pedestrian access routes and places of work kept free from obstructions;
- materials stored and left in a safe and accessible condition.

TOP TIPS

- Plan and organise storage and delivery areas before work starts
- Design scaffolds to keep building entrances clear
- Tidy as you go and at the end of each working day
- Provide rubbish chutes to remove waste from working platforms

**HEALTHY HANDLING INITIATIVE –
ADVICE FOR CLIENTS, DESIGNERS, PLANNING SUPERVISORS AND CONTRACTORS**

CONSIDER ...

- can the task be mechanised?
- why are lifting aids not used?
- unsafe lifting techniques?
- is weight of the load known?
- has the risk been assessed?
- have they been trained?



Lifting and Carrying

Manual handling tasks can cause serious, long term disabling musculo-skeletal injuries.
Heavy blocks, kerbs, cills and lintels present a particularly high risk of injury

INSPECTORS WILL EXPECT TO FIND:

- manual handling tasks eliminated by design or mechanisation where practicable;
- safe handling based on an assessment of the risk from manual handling operations;
- all workers trained in basic safe manual handling techniques.

TOP TIPS

- Design-in safe lifting points for lintels and cills and know the weight of all items to be manually handled
- Use mechanical means to deliver materials to the point of use
- Organise scaffolding to make block laying easier, for example by providing tables or half lifts to minimise bending and twisting
- Use mechanical placement aids e.g. vacuum lifts for kerbs and slabs

**HEALTHY HANDLING INITIATIVE –
ADVICE FOR CLIENTS, DESIGNERS, PLANNING SUPERVISORS AND CONTRACTORS**

CONSIDER ...

- the effect of wet cement
- dermatitis is a disabling condition that can be eliminated or reduced



Wet Cement

Dermatitis and burns can be caused by contact with cement and cement products
Bricklayers are especially at risk from contact with brick and block mortar

INSPECTORS WILL EXPECT TO FIND:

- assessment of risks from cement and management arrangements to control exposure;
- hot and cold running water, adequate sized basins, means of washing and drying hands;
- regular skin inspections by a trained competent person where there is residual risk.

TOP TIPS

- Consider use of suitable gloves
- Keep hands clean by regular use of welfare facilities made available as soon as work starts on site
- Manage welfare facilities to keep them clean and working properly at all times
- Encourage staff to report any occurrence of dermatitis

**HEALTHY HANDLING INITIATIVE –
ADVICE FOR CLIENTS, DESIGNERS, PLANNING SUPERVISORS AND CONTRACTORS**

CONSIDER ...

- the effect of vibrating equipment and tools
- HAVS is a disabling condition that can be eliminated or reduced



Hand Held Vibrating Equipment and Tools

Vibration white finger and noise induced hearing loss can be caused by the use of hand held vibrating equipment and tools

INSPECTORS WILL EXPECT TO FIND:

- information on vibration and noise levels from manufacturers and hire companies;
- risk assessments carried out using the levels to determine safe periods of exposure;
- equipment and tools in good condition and effective maintenance systems.

TOP TIPS

- Design out the need for vibrating hand tools, e.g. for pile cap removal and scabbling
- Establish a hire and purchasing policy that gives preference to low vibration / noise emission equipment and tools
- Use green, amber and red labels on power tools to indicate increasing vibration levels, and control / monitor exposure periods
- If people have difficulty speaking to each other at two metres apart then you may have a noise problem