FIS Health and Safety Working Group

Online, 3-5pm 13th March 2025

Attending:

Iain Mcilwee, FIS
Michelle Armstrong, FIS
David, Veritas Consulting (Chair)
Mary-Jane Smith, Interior Partnerships Ltd
Alan Tittensor, Roseville Contracts
Garry Reid, Linear UK
Charlie Law, Palletloop
Ryan Lewis, Access Panels
Lydia Vazquez, Stanmore
Helen Tuck, Vertex Interiors
Tony Watts, DCL
David Haines, Encon
Paul Clark, VP
Gavin Palmer, Lindner Interiors
Tony Bishop, BDL
John Holton, Tapper Interiors
Michael Lordan, Construction People
Brad Sinclair, PFP UK
Mike Ward, Portview
Joanne Kaiser, Telling Finishings
Antonio Quina (External)
Holly-Ann, Forza Doors

Action Items

- IM, CL, TB and MW (supported by other volunteers yet to be nominated) to form a working group to finalise whether a dedicated plasterboard can be made available more economically to help reduce risk of accident.
- IM, ML, TB, MW (supported by other volunteers yet to be nominated) to form a working group to further develop the manual handling training course and co-ordinate feedback
- IM to approach the British Safety Industry Federation (BSIF) to see if there is appetite to develop detailed guidance on face fit testing, respirator use, and dust management.
- IM to prepare FIS Advisory Note on the use of fixed and semi-fixed knives in line with discussion and circulate for comment before publishing.

Outline

Meeting Introduction and Agenda Overview

- Chair DC opened the meeting, noting no apologies and welcoming all.
- IM reminded all of Competition Act and mission of the group, namely through guidance, collaborative working and influencing external stakeholders to make sure people working on our sites are kept healthy and safe.

Discussion on Plaster Board and Pallet Safety

- IM and CL picked up on the discussion point raised at the last meeting on accidents with plasterboard pallets and the lack of suitable pallet trucks.
- Current options for pallet trucks are discussed, including a slim line truck now available that fits the new Loop pallets (which had, following consultation with the sector, increased the pallet height and string support to help improve pallet related safety and robustness).
- The new loop pallets are designed to be stronger, traceable, and reduce waste, with an incentive for returning them.
- CL shared details of pallet trucks currently available that are recommended for use with the new pallets.
- In this CL introduced a new concept pallet truck designed to fit the new loop pallets. The had a wide fork and was suitable for various plaster board sizes.
- Discussion centred on the truck's availability, cost, and potential modifications to fit specific needs.
- TB specifically highlighted the need to include a brake to be compatible with what is becoming a more common site requirement. More work to was agreed to isolate the exact specification for the Pallet. MJS shared details of an alternative plasterboard pallet truck that had been tested on site.
- Discussion on the potential for FIS to get a feel for level of demand to influence manufacturers and secure better deals for members to either buy or hire more suitable pallets. All agreed it would be a positive intervention and we should at least try as there is a genuine safety case.
- **IM** suggested forming a working group to pursue the development of a more affordable and effective pallet truck.

Introduction of Manual Handling Training Intervention

- ML from Construction People Solutions was introduced and he presented a proposal for a manual handling training intervention that responded to the concerns raised at the last meeting.
- ML presented the course structure (refer to slides).
- The intervention aims to address musculoskeletal disorders, a significant issue in the construction sector. The proposal was to start with manual handling in dry lining, but to evolve to cover other occupational health and training needs.
- The first course has been wireframed with FIS and Platt and Reilly initially to align to CITB short duration training requirements. The course is to create and accessible, fully funded intervention that would be RoSPA and FIS Accredited.
- The course will be designed to be relevant to the dry lining sector and accessible through e-learning, visual, targeted and available in multi languages. There is potential for the course to be accredited and integrated into the CSCS card system.
- The discussion was positive and attendees were encouraged by the progress. Points drawn out included initial concerns about the course's complexity and making sure it is pitched at the right level for operatives. (including those with lower literacy). Suggestions that e-learning was good, but there should be potential for a tutor-led version of the course. The importance of making the course interactive and engaging is highlighted to ensure effective learning was reinforced throughout.

FIS input into new CLC H&S task group to analyse the increase

- IM introduced that the Construction Leadership Council is setting up a task group specifically to look at the increase in fatalities and a few other H&S issues
- Main driver is that the number of deaths of construction industry workers has increased, according to new figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) shows 51 construction workers died of injuries on site in the year to 31 March 2024, up 70% from the prior year and more than double of any other industry (next highest was 23 fatalities recorded in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector) - deaths in construction made up more than a third of the UK total for all sectors (138).
- Construction was the also second most dangerous industry when measured by the rate of fatal injuries per 100,000 workers, with 2.43 fatal injuries per 100,000 workers, up from 2.1 in 2022/23. Whilst better than other sectors (the figure for agriculture, forestry and fishing is 7.51) it is still high.

- Other HSE data also included three-year average figures for work-related ill-health in construction. The health and safety regulator found that about 78,000 workers were affected from 2021/22 to 2023/24, with 52 per cent of them suffering from musculoskeletal disorders.
- This equates to 2 per cent of the UK construction workforce, the HSE said, which is a "significantly higher" rate than for workers across all industries.
- DC has agreed to represent FIS on this task group and will report back at next meeting.

Discussion on Face Fit Testing and PPE

- DC introduced the topic of face fit testing and the challenges of managing bearded workers, which has been raised again through FIS. A number of articles and resources has been prepared over the years, but the group agreed that this remains a very common problem and there is a need for further and better guidance.
- AT shared his experience with providing air-fed PPE to bearded workers, highlighting the cost and logistical challenges.
- TB discusses the availability of negative pressure respirators and the need for proper training and testing.
- The need for monthly inspections of negative pressure respirators and weekly inspections of positive pressure respirators was highlighted and the 2 year retest of face fit - there is a danger this gets overlooked.
- The group agreed to set up a task and finish group to curate a guidance note on providing necessary equipment, risks, and proper usage. IM suggested working with British Safety Industry Federation on this. Consideration with FIS running a campaign “the trouble with stubble” may help to raise the profile.
- A more general discussion on dust awareness as possibly our biggest occupational health risk followed (particularly drilling into concrete and masonry and the exposure to silica dust). ML flagged the HSE's short duration training library and the possibility of claiming grants for extended training.
- The use of RPE in the dry lining sector and the challenges faced by a contractor in managing residual risks. A scientific approach to managing risks (the importance of data-driven decisions relying on dust monitoring), which is costly but potentially more effective than relying on PPE was discussed, but the general feeling was that the controls should still be used.
- Further discussion emphasized the hierarchy of control, including removing hazards, using engineering controls like vacuums, and providing proper training.

- TB highlighted the legal requirement for thorough examinations of vacuums every 14 months and the need for more frequent examinations in higher-risk environments. Designated cutting rooms and dust cubes, and the challenges of managing risks in various construction activities all came up in the discussion, but the conclusion was that more support and education is needed, particularly for smaller businesses.

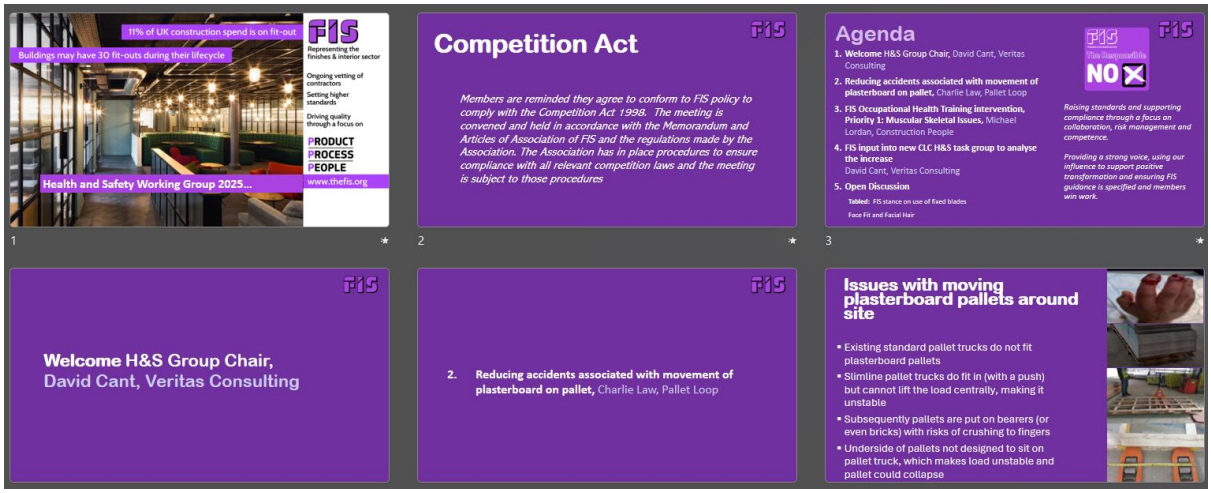
Challenges with Fixed and Semi-Fixed Knives

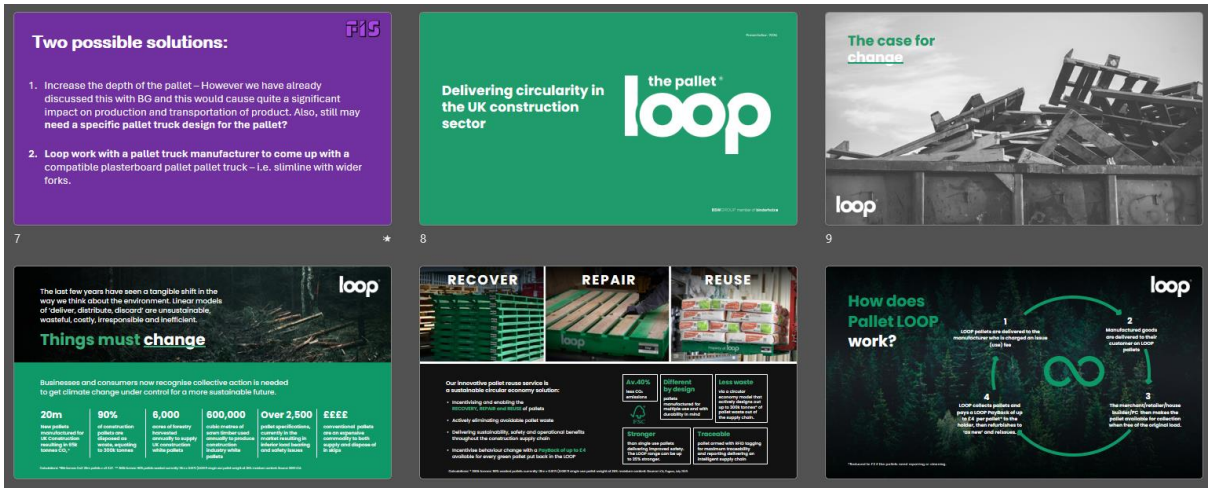
- IM highlighted another issue raised regularly as sites banning the use of fixed and semi-fixed knives and the need for a formal position on this issue and shared current FIS approach (in lieu of having a formal position) – refer to slides.
- It was noted that main contractors including Berkeley, Mace, and Lend Lease had looked to ban such knives, but the trials with ceramic blades and Kevlar gloves had not been ideal.
- It was noted that there are few instances of accident as skilled operatives manage the risks. Concerns were raised that there are not currently are effective alternatives to fixed and semi-fixed knives issues that remove the risk and allow safe and efficient working. Problems with auto-retracting blades getting stuck in an open blade state and the lack of robustness of ceramic solutions. Glove selection was discussed.
- It was suggested the focus should be on the importance of training and risk assessments in managing the use of fixed and semi-fixed knives and making sure it was clear who and why people have them. Recommendation to develop formal FIS guidance on the safe use of fixed and semi-fixed knives and circulating it for comment before publication. In the development TB offered to share their presentation on the safe use of fixed and semi-fixed knives with the FIS.

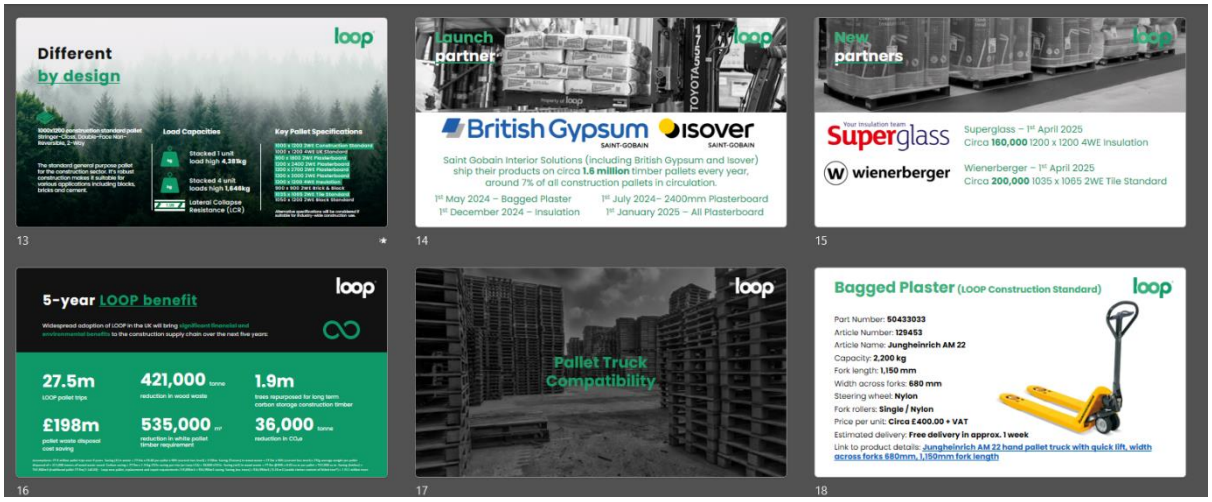
Final Comment

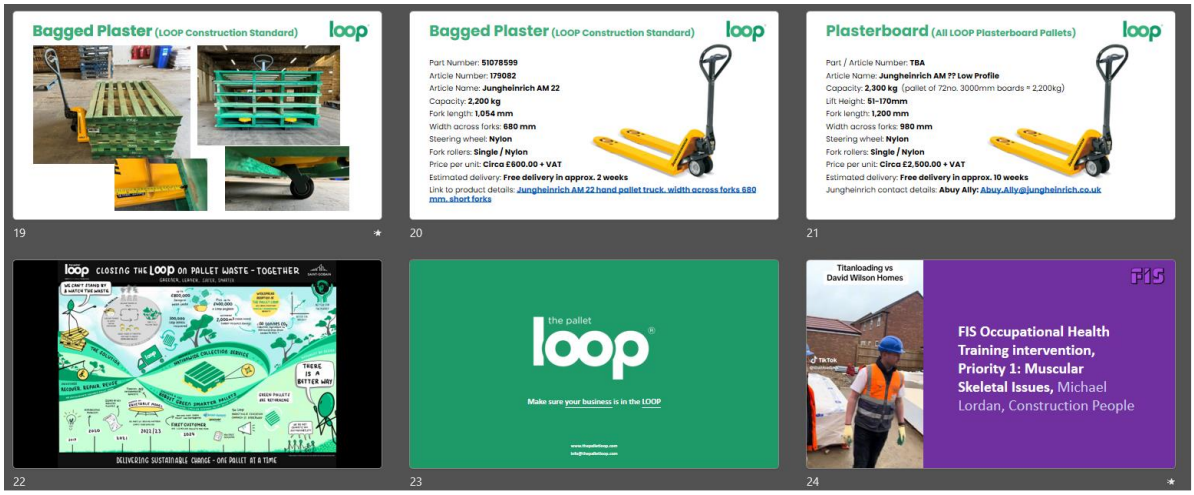
DC concludes the meeting by thanking everyone for their contributions and reminding participants about an upcoming FIS webinar with UKATA on asbestos dangers.

The next meeting would be set once actions suitably developed for comment. Volunteers for the workstreams identified encouraged to contact iainmcilwee@thefis.org.


11% of UK construction spend is on fit-out
Buildings may have 30 fit-outs during their lifecycle
FIS
Representing the finishes & interior sector
Ongoing vetting of contractors
Setting higher standards
Driving quality through a focus on
PRODUCT
PROCESS
PEOPLE
Health and Safety Working Group 2025...
www.thefis.org
1
Competition Act
Members are reminded they agree to conform to FIS policy to comply with the Competition Act 1998. The meeting is convened and held in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association of FIS and the regulations made by the Association. The Association has in place procedures to ensure compliance with all relevant competition laws and the meeting is subject to those procedures
2
Agenda
1. Welcome H&S Group Chair, David Cant, Veritas Consulting
2. Reducing accidents associated with movement of plasterboard on pallet, Charlie Law, Pallet Loop
3. FIS Occupational Health Training intervention, Priority 1: Muscular Skeletal Issues, Michael Lordan, Construction People
4. FIS input into new CLC H&S task group to analyse the increase
David Cant, Veritas Consulting
5. Open Discussion
Tabled: FIS stance on use of fixed blades
Face Fit and Facial Hair
The Unacceptable
NO
Raising standards and supporting compliance through a focus on collaboration, risk management and competence.
Providing a strong voice, using our influence to support positive transformation and ensuring FIS guidance is specified and members win work.
3
Welcome H&S Group Chair,
David Cant, Veritas Consulting
2. Reducing accidents associated with movement of plasterboard on pallet, Charlie Law, Pallet Loop
Issues with moving plasterboard pallets around site
Existing standard pallet trucks do not fit plasterboard pallets
Slimline pallet trucks do fit in (with a push) but cannot lift the load centrally, making it unstable
Subsequently pallets are put on bearers (or even bricks) with risks of crushing to fingers
Underside of pallets not designed to sit on pallet truck, which makes load unstable and pallet could collapse


Two possible solutions:
1. Increase the depth of the pallet – However we have already discussed this with BG and this would cause quite a significant impact on production and transportation of product. Also, still may need a specific pallet truck design for the pallet?
2. Loop work with a pallet truck manufacturer to come up with a compatible plasterboard pallet pallet truck – i.e. slimline with wider forks.
7
Delivering circularity in the UK construction sector
the pallet loop
8
The case for change
loop
9
The last few years have seen a tangible shift in the way we think about the environment. Linear models of 'deliver, distribute, discard' are unsustainable, wasteful, costly, irresponsible and inefficient.
Things must change
Businesses and consumers now recognise collective action is needed to get climate change under control for a more sustainable future.
20m
90%
6,000
600,000
Over 2,500
£££££
RECOVER
REPAIR
REUSE
How does Pallet LOOP work?
1
2
3
4


Different by design
Load Capacities
Key Pallet Specifications
13
Launch partner
British Gypsum
isover
Saint Gobain Interior Solutions (including British Gypsum and Isover) ship their products on circa 1.6 million timber pallets every year, around 7% of all construction pallets in circulation.
1st May 2024 – Bagged Plaster
1st December 2024 – Insulation
1st July 2024– 2400mm Plasterboard
1st January 2025 – All Plasterboard
14
New partners
Superglass
Superglass – 1st April 2025
Circa 160,000 1200 x 1200 4WE Insulation
wienerberger
Wienerberger – 1st April 2025
Circa 200,000 1035 x 1065 2WE Tile Standard
15
5-year LOOP benefit
27.5m
421,000 tonne
1.9m
£198m
535,000 m²
36,000 tonne
16
Pallet Truck Compatibility
17
Bagged Plaster (LOOP Construction Standard)
Part Number: 50433033
Article Number: 129453
Article Name: Jungheinrich AM 22
Capacity: 2,200 kg
Fork length: 1,150 mm
Width across forks: 680 mm
Steering wheel: Nylon
Fork rollers: Single / Nylon
Price per unit: Circa £400.00 + VAT
Estimated delivery: Free delivery in approx. 1 week
Link to product details: Jungheinrich AM 22 hand pallet truck with quick lift, width across forks 680mm, 1,150mm fork length
18


Bagged Plaster (LOOP Construction Standard)
19
Bagged Plaster (LOOP Construction Standard)
Part Number: 51078599
Article Number: 179082
Article Name: Jungheinrich AM 22
Capacity: 2,200 kg
Fork length: 1,054 mm
Width across forks: 680 mm
Steering wheel: Nylon
Fork rollers: Single / Nylon
Price per unit: Circa £600.00 + VAT
Estimated delivery: Free delivery in approx. 2 weeks
Link to product details: Jungheinrich AM 22 hand pallet truck, width across forks 680 mm, short forks
20
Plasterboard (All LOOP Plasterboard Pallets)
Part / Article Number: TBA
Article Name: Jungheinrich AM ?? Low Profile
Capacity: 2,300 kg (pallet of 72no. 3000mm boards = 2,200kg)
Lift Height: 51-170mm
Fork length: 1,200 mm
Width across forks: 980 mm
Steering wheel: Nylon
Fork rollers: Single / Nylon
Price per unit: Circa £2,500.00 + VAT
Estimated delivery: Free delivery in approx. 10 weeks
Jungheinrich contact details: Abuy Ally: Abuy.Ally@jungheinrich.co.uk
21
CLOSING THE LOOP ON PALLET WASTE - TOGETHER
DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE - ONE PALLET AT A TIME
22
the pallet loop
Make sure your business is in the LOOP
23
Titanloading vs David Wilson Homes
FIS Occupational Health Training intervention, Priority 1: Muscular Skeletal Issues, Michael Lordan, Construction People
24


Manual Handling Concerns
One out of every three workplace injuries are the result of poor manual handling techniques.
The construction industry has the highest rate of musculoskeletal problems of any sector.
Repeated or awkward handling of heavy items
Across the whole of construction, over 50,000 work-related ill health cases (new or longstanding) are reported every year and over 1.5 million days are lost due to musculoskeletal injuries
25
Manual Handling Concerns
Proposal:
FIS Develop with Construction People Solutions an Industry Standard Occupational Health training course
Accredit through RoSPA
Use e-learning, 90 minutes modulised
Funded as a CITB Short Duration Course (paid to train)
Target endorsement on CSCS Card and making it a standard requirement for labourers
26
New CLC Working Group
David Cant, Veritas Consulting
Health, Safety & Wellbeing
27
Open Discussion
How to choose the right dust masks for your team
I am afraid that it is not an option for an employer to allow staff to wear tight-fitting masks and ignore the clean-shaven requirement. The employer would be failing to manage their respiratory protection policy. If an employee refuses to shave, then they cannot be deployed in an area where tight-fitting RPE is used to control exposure.
Open Discussion
Historically, in line with HSE guidance, XXX banned the use of fixed bladed and semi fixed bladed knives.
Contractors have challenged this approach and suggest that given the nature of some materials they regularly have to cut, a fixed blade knife is the best and safest option.
Open Discussion
As it stands, FIS do not have a formal position on selection of cutting tools and would defer to the Contractor's Risk Assessment and Method Statement and the training of individual workers.
In terms of specifics, we have also been made aware of concerns that alternative solutions offered can introduce a hazard and consequently do not provide a penacea solution, concerns have also been raised on durability of e.g. ceramic alternatives.
We do recommend that wherever possible efforts are made to reduce the number of cuts by increasing the use of pre-cut systems, but this needs earlier engagement and whilst additionally offers potential for significant waste reduction, sadly procurement processes limit the potential.