

Accidents - how to deal with them

Introduction

Following an accident on site there seem to be so many things to do. This Information Sheet aims to provide clear guidance on the steps that should be taken when setting up procedures on site, how to deal with an accident when it occurs and how to comply with current legal requirements.

The type of accident that occurs on construction sites range from a cut finger to a fatality or a vehicle collision to the collapse of a structure. Your site management needs to be equipped to be able to deal with all types of accidents to ensure that you, as a company, comply with your legal obligations and implement good management practice on your construction sites.

In the event of an accident or emergency it is quite easy to forget what should and should not be done. Having a well-established procedure that everyone on site is aware of and understands will enable site management to cope calmly and effectively in the aftermath of an accident. Details of this procedure should be part of your construction phase health & safety plan and everyone on site should be informed of the procedure to be followed during their induction. Even when CDM regulations do not apply, you should have a procedure in place to follow an accident should one occur. It is helpful to have a standard procedure within your health and safety policy, which is customised with more specific information relevant to each project or site.

Good management following an accident should ensure that appropriate records are made; the accident is reported correctly and that any lessons to be learned from the accident are understood and communicated to the workforce.

Legal requirements

The reporting of certain types of injury and incidents to the enforcing authority - Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or the Local Authority - is a legal requirement under the **Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)** Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974 and failure to comply with these regulations is a criminal offence.

In addition, the police and HSE have the right to investigate fatal accidents at work and you should notify all fatal accidents to HM Coroner via your local police station, you should include this number in your emergency procedures. The police will often notify the HSE of a death at work. However, you need to ensure that this has actually been done.

RIDDOR requirements

RIDDOR classifies deaths, major injuries (specified in the regulations) and injuries resulting in absence from work for over seven days and dangerous occurrences (specified in the regulations) as reportable. If you are an employer or a person in control of premises **you** have a duty to report these types of incidents (see page four for details).

You can now report all reportable incidents to the **Incident Contact Centre (ICC)** and they will forward details to the local enforcing authority as necessary. Deaths, major injuries and dangerous occurrences have to be reported immediately and this is usually done by telephone. When reporting the incident by telephone you may find it helpful to have a copy of the **F2508** with as much information completed as possible as the ICC will ask for this information. You will then be given a unique reference number relating to the incident. The ICC will send you a copy of the F2508 completed on your behalf which you must keep for your own records, where you are working as a contractor to another principal contractor they may also request a copy of the report.

For over seven day injuries you need to inform the ICC within 10 days of you becoming aware of the fact that the injury will result in more than seven days off. You can do this by telephone as well.

F2508 forms are available as a download from the HSE website <https://www.hse.gov.uk/forms/incident/> from Construction Industry Publications (CIP) on 0870 078 4400 or you can complete a form on the internet at <http://www.riddor.gov.uk/eaview/reportanincident.html>.

Employers, self-employed people and those in control of premises have a duty to report some accidents and incidents at work under RIDDOR - only 'responsible persons' including employers, the self-employed and people in control of work premises should submit reports under RIDDOR.

Reporting online

Responsible persons should complete the appropriate online report form listed below. The form will then be submitted directly to the RIDDOR database. You will receive a copy for your records.

Report of: an injury; a dangerous occurrence; a case of disease; flammable gas incident and dangerous gas fitting

Telephone

All incidents can be reported online but a telephone service is also provided for reporting fatal and major injuries only - call the Incident Contact Centre on 0845 300 99 23 (opening hours Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm).

Reporting out of hours

The HSE and local authority enforcement officers are not an emergency service. If you want to report less serious incidents out of normal working hours, you can always complete an online form.

Paper forms

There is no longer a paper form for RIDDOR reporting, since the online system is the preferred reporting mechanism. Should it be essential for you to submit a report by post, it should be sent to:

RIDDOR Reports

Health and Safety Executive
Redgrave Court, Merton Road, Bootle, Merseyside L20 7HS

Setting up site

The procedures to be followed in the event of any emergency incident should be clear and specific to the project or site and should detail the following as a minimum:

Who is to take control following an accident?

This should be someone who is likely to be available on the site at all times (ie the site manager/site agent) and who is able to take control of an emergency situation.

Who will provide first aid?

The majority of construction sites require a fully qualified first aider who has attended an HSE approved four day course within the last three years to be available at all times. Sites that do not require a fully qualified first aider due to the low risk nature of the work must identify an 'appointed person'. It is recommended that 'appointed persons' attend a recognised emergency first aid course.

Where the first aid box/es are located and who is responsible for ensuring they are fully stocked

First aid boxes should be easily available in the event of an emergency and should be regularly checked to ensure that they are fully stocked and all items are in a usable condition. Contact numbers for key company personnel (health & safety department, personnel department or director) to be notified of any accidents and contact numbers for local hospitals, HSE, local police station and the emergency services. These contact numbers should be kept up to date and should be displayed in the site office.

The course of action that must be followed by the 'person who takes control' in the event of an accident

These are your emergency procedures and there should be step by step instructions on how to deal with an incident. Further details are contained in the section below.

Guidance on action to take after the accident

Information should be given on who to inform within the company (this is particularly important in the event of a fatality), who informs the injured persons family and the company policy on dealing with press enquiries. Further information to consider is how to deal with witnesses to the accident, if and when to close the site and how to debrief site management.

How information should be recorded and by whom

Your procedures should clearly state who should complete and submit the **F2508**, what level of investigation should be carried out and any company specific forms to complete in addition to the RIDDOR requirements.

In the event of an accident (immediate action)

1 Take control of the situation

The person identified in your emergency procedures should make him/herself known and decide on the course of action to follow. This may not be a simple task and they will need to instruct others on appropriate action to take (eg preventing access to an area, calling emergency services and fetching first aid equipment).

2 Assess the situation

The person in control will need to identify whether the accident is a serious or minor incident. This assessment will determine the course of action. In a minor incident the first aider may be required to administer treatment and the incident recorded in the accident book. In the event of a major incident your full emergency procedures may need to be instigated and the actions below taken. You may also need to consider calling the emergency service at this stage.

3 Make sure the area is safe

Before anyone from site enters, even if first aid is required, the area must be made safe. The emergency services may require access and they will usually request confirmation that the area has been made safe. This may not be easy and may take some time (eg in the event of a scaffold collapse).

4 Summon first aiders

If possible, identify any person who is injured or missing and inform the first aiders or appointed persons. The first aider may request assistance from bystanders particularly where there is more than one casualty. They may also request bystanders to fetch equipment and they may request an ambulance.

5 The emergency services

When calling the emergency services, give the correct site address and location of site entrance. You will be requested by the operator to give a contact telephone number, which should (if possible) be the site phone number. The person calling the emergency services should return to the scene of the accident and confirm that the ambulance has been called before returning to the phone in case the operator needs to contact the site. You should identify someone to stand outside the site to direct emergency services to the location of the accident. The emergency services may need

the use of site equipment (eg lifting equipment) and this should be made available with a competent operator. Safe working practices must still be followed.

6 Stop all nearby work that may affect the scene of the accident

Any work that affects the scene of the accident should be stopped and made safe. This includes work that would impede access or could cause the scene of the accident to become unstable. Noisy work should be stopped as it could cause instructions not to be heard and distract those dealing with the incident.

7 Cordon off unsafe work areas to prevent access

This may require the erection of barriers, securing of gates and doors or the placing of a guard to prevent access.

8 Preserve the scene of the accident

Depending upon the incident the police, HSE and the company health and safety advisor may wish to visit the scene.

9 Check other workers and bystanders for signs of injury

Other workers may have suffered minor injuries that require treatment. They may also be suffering from shock and should be treated accordingly.

In the event of an accident (follow up action)

a. Notify company head office in accordance with your procedures

You are usually required to notify your insurance company who will ask for copies of the F2508 and the results of any investigation.

b. Contact any injured persons family

Depending on the severity of the injury, this should be done in person wherever possible and should be a senior member of the company. In the event of a serious injury the police may wish to be involved in notifying families.

c. Inspect the work area, plant and equipment

If the area is not required to be sealed, the work area, plant and equipment should be checked to ensure that it is safe to use. Unsafe areas must remain cordoned off and any equipment that may be defective must be impounded or isolated to prevent further usage (eg electrical equipment, ladders, damaged plant and tools). Any equipment

impounded must be kept secure. Where possible attach a label containing details of the accident to which it relates.

d. Take photographs of the scene of the accident

Make a note of the number of each photograph and what the picture is intended to show. Ensure that the area is safe for you to take photographs. Copies of the photographs should be passed as soon as possible to the person within your company carrying out any investigation. Ensure that the photographs are time and date stamped. Print a copy as soon as possible to preserve the information.

e. Note the names of witnesses to the accident

You should take names, contact numbers and addresses of all witnesses.

f. Complete the accident book with as much detail as possible.

The Social Security Act 1992 specifically requires employers to keep information on accidents. This should be the **Statutory Accident Book for all Employee Accidents** (Form B1 510) or equivalent. Each entry should be made on a separate page and the completed page securely stored to protect personal data (under the Data Protection Act). An entry may be made by the employee or by anyone acting on their behalf. This information should also be kept for a period not less than three years.

g. Report the incident

If the incident is a death, reportable major injury or a dangerous occurrence phone the Incident Contact Centre 0845 300 99 23 as soon as possible and provide details as requested. For over seven day injuries you must do this within 10 days.

h. Begin an investigation

There is nearly always something to be learned following an accident and ideally the causes of all accidents should be established regardless of whether injury or damage resulted. The level and nature of an investigation should reflect the significance of the event being investigated and you will need to consider each event separately when deciding upon the depth of investigation. In depth investigations should identify the underlying causes of the accident which may be different to the direct cause of the incident. It is important that all accidents are investigated as quickly as possible as the longer the delay the less likely it is that the true facts of the accident will be ascertained. The results of the accident investigation may lead to a review and possible amendment to the risk assessment.

Record keeping

You will have numerous records to keep following an accident, even a minor accident and you should maintain easily accessible records for all accidents that have occurred within your company. In addition to the legal requirements, accident information can help you as an organisation identify key risk areas within your business and to take appropriate action to prevent similar accidents from occurring.

- The accident book must be kept for three years following the last entry. To avoid the problem of books being misplaced or lost CIP produce a duplicate accident book. This enables a copy of each entry to be sent to the company head office that can maintain a central record of all accidents and will ensure that a copy is kept for the appropriate length of time.
- The F2508 for reportable incidents should be kept for a period of not less than three years from the date the accident occurred. Information may be stored on computer provided details can be retrieved and printed out as you must make this record available to the HSE if requested. Appointed trade union representatives and representatives of employee safety should be provided with a copy of the F2508 if it relates to the workplace or the group of employees represented.
- It is advisable to keep copies of any accident investigation reports for the same period as above (ie three years). For further information, contact the Construction Confederation 'health and safety department' on 0870 89 89 090.

Details of reportable major injuries, over three day injuries and dangerous occurrences as defined by RIDDOR

Major injuries

To persons at work:

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| 01 | Any fracture, other than to the fingers, thumbs or toes |
| 02 | Any amputation |
| 03 | Dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee or spine |
| 04 | Loss of sight whether temporary or permanent |
| 05 | A chemical or hot metal burn to the eye or any penetrating injury to the eye |

- 06 Any injury resulting from an electric shock or electrical burn including any electrical burn caused by arcing or arcing products leading to unconsciousness or requiring resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours
- 07 Any other injury:
- Leading to hypothermia, heat induced illness or to unconsciousness
 - Requiring resuscitation
 - Requiring admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours
- 08 Loss of consciousness caused by asphyxia or by exposure to a harmful substance or biological agent
- 09 Either of the following conditions which result from the absorption of any substance by inhalation, ingestion or through the skin:
- Acute illness requiring medical treatment
 - Loss of consciousness
- 10 Acute illness which requires medical treatment where there is reason to believe that this resulted from exposure to a biological agent or its toxins or infected material

To persons not at work (eg a member of the public)

If a person suffers an injury in connection with your work and they are taken to hospital, then it is reportable as a major injury.

Over seven day injuries

Injuries resulting from accidents to people who are at work which are not reportable as a major injury (see list above) but result in a person being unable to do their normal work for more than seven consecutive days not counting the day of the accident. If the seven days go over a weekend and the person would have been unable to work on those days due to the injury then you must include these days.

Dangerous occurrences

If an incident occurs from the list below and nobody is injured it is reportable as a dangerous occurrence. If an injury does occur and is from either category above (1) or (2) then you report the incident in that category not as a dangerous occurrence. We have listed here the dangerous occurrences most associated with construction. However, the list is not exclusive and RIDDOR must be consulted for a full list of dangerous occurrences.

Lifting machinery, etc

The collapse of, the overturning of or the failure of any load bearing part of any:

- Lift or hoist
- Crane or derrick
- Mobile powered access platform
- Access cradle or window cleaning cradle
- Excavator
- Pile driving frame or rig having an overall height when operating of more than 7 metres
- Fork lift truck

Pressure systems

The failure of any closed vessel (including a boiler or boiler tube) or of any associated pipe work in which the internal pressure was above or below atmospheric pressure where the failure has the potential to cause the death of any person.

Overhead electric lines

Any unintentional incident in which plant or equipment either:

- Comes into contact with an un-insulated overhead electric line in which the voltage exceeds 200 volts
- Causes an electrical discharge from such an electric line by coming into close proximity to it

Electrical short circuit

Electrical short circuit or overload attended by fire or explosion which results in the stoppage of the plant involved for more than 24 hours or which has the potential to cause the death of any person.

Breathing apparatus

Any incident in which breathing apparatus malfunctions:

- While in use
- During testing immediately prior to use in such a way that had the malfunction occurred while the apparatus was in use it would have posed a danger to the health and safety of the user

This paragraph shall not apply to breathing apparatus while it is being:

- Used in a mine
- Maintained or tested as part of a routine maintenance procedure

Collapse of scaffolding

The complete or partial collapse of any scaffold which is:

- More than five metres in height which results in a substantial part of the scaffold falling or overturning
- Erected over or adjacent to water in circumstances such that there would be a risk of drowning to a person falling from the scaffold into the water
- The suspension arrangements including any outrigger of any slung or suspended scaffold which causes a working platform or cradle to fall

Collapse of building or structure

Any unintended collapse or partial collapse of any:

- Building or structure (whether above or below ground) under construction, reconstruction, alteration or demolition which involves a fall of more than five tonnes of material
- Floor or wall of any building (whether above or below ground) used as a place of work
- False work

Explosion or fire

Any explosion or fire occurring in any plant or premises which results in the stoppage of that plant or the suspension of normal work in those premises for more than 24 hours where the explosion or fire was due to the ignition of any material.

Escape of substances

The accidental release or the escape of any substance in a quantity sufficient to cause the death, major injury or any other damage to the health of any person must be reported.

References

Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974
Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)
Incident Contact Centre (ICC) F2508
Construction Industry Publications (CIP)
Social Security Act 1992
Statutory Accident Book for all Employee Accidents (Form B1510)

Acknowledgement: This information has been reviewed and updated by Jim Slater (CDM-C and Health & Safety Advisor)
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