



Inspectors Safe Working Practices

Safe Working Practices for Inspectors and Other Staff Visiting Construction Sites or Premises where Excavation, Demolition, Construction Work, Scaffolding or Dangerous Structures are Present

APPLICABILITY

This Safe Working Practice is applicable to all Torbay Council staff whose duties require them to visit sites or premises, particularly where building or engineering construction is involved and irrespective of the ownership of the land, or when visiting Council premises around which a scaffolding has been erected. See also “**HIGHWAYS**” and “**ROAD WORKS**”.

INTRODUCTION

Construction and engineering work sites contain more hazards than many other work areas and unfortunately cause almost twice as many fatal accidents as any other single industry. The nature of hazards on such sites, unlike any other industry may vary in location and severity from day-to-day.

Contractor’s Responsibilities. Although a contractor has legal obligations for the safety of a site or structure local experience has indicated that the attitude to safety of some contractors and/or their employees and their work processes is not conducive to the interests of health and safety, either of their own staff or others, including members of the public. Future contracts issued by this Council will therefore contain a requirement for contractors to lodge a copy of their safety policy with the Council and as for minor contractors, be required to accept our own safety policy, codes of practice and safe systems of work, as the minimum required standard for any works on behalf of the Council.

Torbay Council staff visiting construction sites therefore need to be able to protect themselves and to identify and report basic hazards to the safety of themselves and which might be thought to affect others including members of the public. This requires a commonsense approach without the need for individuals to possess professional knowledge outside the scope of their own particular specialisation. All appropriate staff are to comply with these safe working practices, and you are reminded that staff of the Legal Section and the Safety Team are available to give whatever additional advice might be required.

If you encounter an unsafe practice or a serious hazard likely to endanger yourself, a colleague or members of the public, the site supervisor should be made aware of it. If the hazard is not removed or made safe the matter should be reported immediately to the Health and Safety Team. On no account should you put yourself at risk by entering into any work area where an unsafe method of work is being operated or a hazard exists.

CODE OF PRACTICE TO ENSURE SAFE WORKING PRACTICE DURING SITE INSPECTIONS

1. On arrival at a site, whenever possible, inform a responsible person of your presence.

2. Protective Clothing

Staff visiting sites must wear items of protective clothing suited to the conditions of the site being visited and/or the particular work process being inspected. It is your responsibility to ensure you have suitable protective clothing and that it is used. High visibility safety jackets should be worn, safety helmets should be worn wherever construction work is taking place and protective footwear with steel caps and a sole designed to prevent both slipping in wet and muddy conditions and the penetration of sharp objects should be used.

3. Safety Equipment

According to the work being carried out and the site being visited it is essential to wear or use specialist safety equipment. For example, safety harness, belts and ropes, lifelines, breathing apparatus, etc. In some confined spaces there must be air testing apparatus to determine the existence or otherwise of harmful gases and fumes, toxicity or the lack of adequate oxygen supply.

A torch should always be used if you will need to enter unlit passageways, roof spaces, basements or other areas. Pay particular attention to obstacles, equipment or materials etc. which may have been left lying around in a building under construction. Pay particular attention also to low beams or other obstacles at head height. Be wary of roof areas, skylights, and the like where the possibility of collapse under a person's weight is often possible. many fatalities occur this way.

4. Permits to Work System in Confined Spaces

Entry into confined spaces is subject to the provision of a Written Permit to Work. Strict adherence must be given to the requirements of that system in relation to entry and to the time you are permitted to remain in the confined space (see "Permit to Work" and "Confined Spaces").

A confined space is a term which has a wide application. For example it may be one of the following:-

- Closed tanks
- Large ducts
- Sewers, enclosed drains
- Reaction vessels, open topped tanks and vats (particularly where heavier-than-air gases or vapours may be present)
- Closed and unventilated rooms, and medium sized and large furnaces and ovens, in which a dangerous accumulation of gases can build up because of the restricted circulation even though the door is left open.

Dangerous concentrations of gases and vapours can arise from sources both within and without confined spaces. Refer to the section on "Confined Spaces" and "Sewers" for more details. See also "Permit to Work".

5. Scaffolding and Ladders

Scaffold erected by contractors or the local authority is required to be inspected before it may be used, within the immediately preceding seven days and thereafter once per week. Also it must be inspected after rough, frosty or cold weather which might have affected its stability.

Before using a scaffold you should ensure that it is safe. If you have any doubts check that an inspection certificate has been issued certifying the scaffold. This should be on Form 91, and should be available on site where it may be inspected. Where works are expected to be completed within six weeks, the Form 91 may be retained in the contractor's or employer's office. Any obvious defects should be reported to the site supervisor.

5.1 Use of Scaffolds

Partly erected scaffolds must not be used.

Do not use a scaffold which shows sign of defects.

All scaffolds should be fitted with hand rails and toe boards.

Suitable and safe means of access and egress must be provided to all working platforms.

Ladders must be tied at the top and extend 3'6" (1.1 metres) above the landing platform.

Do not allow a portable scaffold to be moved while you are on it.

Do not use a portable or mobile scaffold where the height exceeds four times the least width.

Make sure the scaffold is on a firm, level base, not overloaded and securely tied to the building or structure where it is not designated to be independent.

Scaffolds should be properly braced in all directions.

Scaffold boards should be butt jointed and no overhang should exceed four times the thickness of the board.

Do not use a scaffold with an excavation near or under it.

Do not stand under any load being lifted.

**DO NOT USE A SCAFFOLD WHICH CONTRAVENES THE ABOVE RULES
OR WHICH YOU CONSIDER TO BE UNSAFE.**

5.2 Use of Ladders

All reasonable precautions must be taken when using ladders and steps in order to safeguard your own health and safety.

All ladders should conform to British and European Standards.

Ladders and steps should be inspected before use to ensure they are sound and free from defects. Look out for split stiles and treads, broken, loose or missing rungs and tie bars, loose hinges to back flap of step ladders and defective ropes.

Do not use two ladders which have been lashed together to make a longer one.

Ensure the ladder is on a sound, firm and level base and that the top is firmly secured, particularly with heights over 9'9" (3 metres).

Ensure the ladder is set at a safe angle with the base 1ft (0.3 metres) out for every 4ft (1.2 metres) of height.

Ladders giving access to scaffolds and working platforms must be securely tied to the landing place and extend at least 3'6" (1.1 metres) above the platform.

Have only one person on a ladder at a time to avoid overloading.

Do not over-reach or lean sideways from a ladder.

Always face the ladder when ascending or descending and use both hands to obtain a good hold.

Beware of wet, greasy or icy rungs. Clean off mud and grease from your footwear before ascending.

On no account should the space between a ladder and any other foothold be straddled.

Do not go onto a ladder which is being used horizontally, or which is near any electrical equipment or power lines with exposed live conductors.

Do not climb above the third rung from the top.

Do not climb a ladder erected close to a door unless the door is locked shut and another person is on guard.

Ladders arising over 30ft. (10 metres) should have an intermediate platform equipped with guard rails and toe boards.

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY DO NOT ATTEMPT TO USE ANY LADDER WHICH YOU SUSPECT DOES NOT CONFIRM TO THESE STANDARDS OF SAFETY.

5.3 Excavations and Trenches

Excavation or trenches deeper than 4ft (1.2m) must be adequately shored. Do not enter any excavation or trench which is not in your opinion adequately shored up or the shoring materials are not in good condition.

Safety headgear and protective clothing must be worn when entering excavations or trenches 4'6" (1.35m) or more in depth and another person should always be present or made aware of your entering the excavation.

Avoid putting your weight onto the edge of an excavation or trench. If protective planks are provided along the edges, make sure you use these to gain access to the excavation or to inspect it from the top. Always use a ladder to enter into an excavation and on no account jump down into any excavation or trench.

Do not enter any excavation or trench which has excavated materials or building materials stored immediately adjoining the excavation in such a way that they could fall in or, has any ladder or scaffolding resting on the ground in the vicinity which could cause a collapse into the excavation.

5.4 Roofs

Do not enter onto a sloping roof unless suitable crawling boards or ladders are provided and securely fixed. Particular attention should be given to all roofs and other areas made of fragile materials.

Ensure a suitable barrier has been erected at the lower edge of a sloping roof.

Any ladder used for access to a roof must be sound and set upon on a firm, level footing and comply with the codes of practice for the safe use of ladders.

Check that any dangerous openings or fragile materials have been railed off or suitably covered.

6. Unsafe Areas

When on a site, if, in your opinion it is unsafe to do so, you are not to enter into any area, excavation or other confined space or onto any scaffolding or ladder structure. In such circumstances you must take care for yourself and have regard to others who may be affected (Section 7, HASAW Act). You should contact the site supervisor and if necessary your own superior officer.

In the case of unsafe structures that present an imminent danger of collapse, or suggest it would be unsafe to enter, you should consider getting the Engineering Department to arrange for the provision of temporary work to render the structure safe enough for you to carry out whatever emergency assessment has to be made.

7. Operation of Equipment

Do not operate any plant or equipment or handle any substance unless you are authorised to do so, have been trained to operate it and you consider it in a safe condition. Do not approach dangerously close to anyone using plant or equipment or any substance which Inspectors Safe Working Practices could injure you or cause you harm.

8. Work on the Highway

When involved with work on the highway, ensure that warning notices are displayed correctly and at the proper distances. You should wear suitable high visibility clothing. Be particularly careful not to put yourself at risk on the highway. If in doubt, refer to the Highways and Engineering Department for advice. All Highway Inspectors' vehicles (cars) must be equipped with an orange flashing light, in working order, for use at Highway Construction sites.

9. Action on Finding a Hazard or Unsafe Working Practice

If you identify a hazard in the area in which you are working and:-

- 9.1 The site is NOT controlled by the Council, irrespective of site ownership, you should inform immediately the site agent or responsible person in charge, of your concern and request remedial action. If no such remedial action is forthcoming, or the site agent or person in charge cannot immediately be contacted, you should report the matter to your own superior in order that the contractor may be notified of the hazard and the section required to make the area safe.
- 9.2 The site IS controlled by the Council, you will obviously be required to contact the supervisor on site in order to have the situation remedied. You should also report the matter to a responsible officer of the Council if there is any delay in removing the hazard.

Continuous efforts must be made by the officer identifying any hazard to contact the person responsible for removing the hazard and to protect other persons from danger until such contact is made and the area made safe.

In all such incidents you should make a brief written record of the events. If at any time you consider that appropriate remedial action has not been taken, or is in your opinion being unnecessarily delayed, you should report the matter to your head of department and the Executive Team with a view to informing the Health and Safety Executive Team.

At all times, in whatever situation you may find yourself, and with the guidance you have been given, you are expected to do what you consider to be reasonable in the interests of the safety of yourself and others in those circumstances and in accordance with the knowledge you have at that particular time.