

Provision of welfare facilities during construction work

HSE information sheet

Construction Information Sheet No 59



Introduction

This information sheet is for dutyholders involved in construction work. It replaces previous guidance contained in *Provision of welfare facilities at transient construction sites* and in *Provision of welfare facilities at fixed construction sites*. It gives guidance on the **minimum** welfare facilities that must be provided or made available to workers on construction sites.

Construction workers need adequate toilet and washing facilities, a place to warm up and eat their food and somewhere to store clothing. However, these basic requirements are often neglected. A cold water tap and chemical toilet on their own are not adequate facilities. Good facilities can positively benefit health and well-being and can help to prevent dermatitis.

General duties (Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007)¹

Clients

If you are a client (but not a domestic client, ie you or your family live in the building under construction) then you must ensure that your contractors have arrangements to provide adequate welfare facilities for construction workers. This does not mean that you have to provide the facilities yourself. If the work is notifiable (that is lasts more than 30 days or will involve more than 500 person days of work) then you must ensure that construction work (including demolition) does not start until suitable welfare facilities are in place.

CDM coordinators

You should give suitable and sufficient advice to the client on the measures needed to ensure that suitable welfare is provided during the construction phase.

Principal contractors

You should make sure that suitable welfare facilities are provided from the start and are maintained throughout the construction phase.

Contractors (including the self-employed)

In all cases you should ensure that there are adequate welfare facilities for workers under your control.

Planning

The availability of welfare facilities, their location on site and regular maintenance must be considered at the planning and preparation stages of every construction project, before construction work (including demolition) starts.

When planning welfare provision, consider:

- the nature of the work to be carried out and the health risks associated with it. For example, consider the provision of showers if the project involves hazardous substances or very dirty work, eg sewer maintenance, dusty demolition activities, work with contaminated land or concrete pouring;
- the distance workers will have to travel to the welfare facilities;
- the duration of the work and number of different locations;
- the numbers of people who will use them;
- the cleaning and maintenance of the welfare facilities;
- whether they need to be relocated during the construction phase.

Installing and removing from site

You need to plan how welfare units will be moved from delivery vehicles into position. It is preferable to mechanically move these units; if manual handling cannot be avoided then you should manage the risk effectively. Your plans should cover safe lifting practices and ensure proper protection of workers from falls from vehicles or portable units.

Positioning on site

You should site welfare units and manage traffic effectively to ensure adequate segregation of pedestrians and vehicles.

Toilets

So far as is reasonably practicable you need to provide flushing toilets and running water, connected to mains water and drainage systems. If this is not possible, facilities with a built-in water supply and drainage tanks should be used. Portable chemical toilets are acceptable only if it is not reasonably practicable to make other adequate provision.

Toilets must be adequately ventilated, lit and maintained in a clean condition. The frequency of cleaning will depend on usage. Basic daily cleaning may not always be sufficient.

Provide an adequate number of toilets. The number needed will depend on the number of workers on site and the type of facilities provided. Portable toilets have a limited capacity and will need emptying. The number of portable toilets needed depends on the number of persons and the frequency of emptying. BS6465-1:2006 recommends a ratio of 1 toilet to 7 persons where portable toilets are emptied once a week.

Men and women may use the same toilet, if it is in a lockable room and partitioned from any urinals. Otherwise provide separate toilets. Adequate supplies of toilet paper should always be available.

Sanitary waste disposal should be provided in facilities used by female workers.

Washing facilities

Provide washing facilities next to both toilets **and** changing areas. Consider placing them next to rest areas if these are far from toilets or changing areas. They should include:

- a supply of clean hot and cold, or warm, water (which should be running water so far as is reasonably practicable);
- soap or other suitable means of cleaning;
- towels or other suitable means of drying;
- sufficient ventilation and lighting;
- sinks large enough to wash face, hands and forearms.

Men and women can share sinks used for washing hands, face and arms. Unisex shower facilities can be provided if they are in a separate, lockable room, which can be used by one person at a time.

Showers used for particularly dirty work, or when workers are exposed to especially hazardous substances (eg development of contaminated land, or demolition of old industrial buildings which are contaminated with toxic substances etc), will need to be separate from the main facilities.

Specialist facilities are needed for certain activities, eg working with lead or asbestos or tunnelling in compressed air.

Drinking water

A supply of wholesome drinking water should be readily available. Where possible, it should be supplied direct from the mains. If water is stored, protect it from possible contamination and make sure it is changed often enough to prevent it from becoming stale or contaminated. Where necessary, clearly mark the drinking water supply to prevent it being confused with hazardous liquids or water which is not fit to drink. Provide cups or other drinking vessels at the outlet, unless the water is supplied in an upward jet, which can be drunk easily (eg a drinking fountain).

Changing rooms and lockers

Every site should have arrangements for securely storing personal clothing not worn on site and for protective clothing needed for site work. Men and women should be able to change separately. Separate lockers might be needed, although on smaller sites the site office may be a suitable storage area provided it is kept secure. Where there is a risk of protective site clothing contaminating everyday clothing, items should be stored separately.

Provision should be made to allow wet clothing to be dried. As a general rule clothing should not be placed directly on heaters due to the risk of fire. If electrical heaters are used, they should be properly ventilated and, if possible, fitted with a high temperature cut-out device.

Rest facilities

Rest facilities should provide shelter from wind and rain. The rest facilities should have adequate numbers of tables, seating with backs, a means for heating water for drinks and for warming up food (eg a gas or electrical heating ring or microwave oven) and be adequately heated. Rest areas are not to be used to store plant, equipment or materials.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in enclosed public places and workplaces such as construction sites or work vehicles. Further information is available at

www.smokefreeengland.co.uk,
www.clearingtheairsotland.com and
www.smokingbanwales.co.uk.

Heating

Rest facilities will normally require heating. Using properly maintained electrical equipment can eliminate the risks associated with LPG heaters. Inadequately ventilated LPG cookers and heaters can produce carbon monoxide, with potentially fatal results. Flammable gas may escape from leaking cylinders, which have not been properly turned off. If LPG is used reduce the risks by:

- using and storing the cylinders in safe, well-ventilated places outside the accommodation (including overnight) or in purpose-built ventilated storage areas;
- ensuring that the appliances have been properly installed, checked and maintained by a competent person;
- providing adequate combustion ventilation (provide fixed grilles at high and low level);
- checking that the ventilation provided is not blocked, eg fixed grilles blocked by newspaper or rags in cold weather to 'stop draughts';
- checking that cylinders are properly turned off when not in use;
- using wall or ceiling-mounted carbon monoxide detectors.

Use of alternative facilities for transient construction sites

For the purpose of this information sheet, a transient construction site is either where short duration work (up to a week) is carried out at one or many locations, or is of a longer duration carried out while moving over a continuous geographical area, eg major roadworks, cable laying contracts etc.

In such cases, it may be appropriate to make arrangements to use facilities provided by the owner of existing premises, in which the work is being done, local public facilities or the facilities of local businesses. Clear agreement should be made with the provider of the facilities; it should not be assumed that local commercial premises can be used without their agreement. In all cases the standards above must be provided or made available. Facilities must be readily accessible to the worksite, open at all relevant times, be at no cost to the workers, be of an acceptable standard in terms of cleanliness and have hand-washing facilities. Workers need to be made aware of the arrangements to use them and be informed of their location.

Table 1 gives an indication of the options available, in order of preference, for providing welfare facilities for transient construction sites.

Table 1 Welfare facilities: the options

Type of installation	Additional notes
1a Fixed installation: connected to mains drainage and water.	Order of preference: ■ on site; ■ at a base location; ■ at a satellite compound. NB This may include the pre-arranged use of private facilities. Permission, preferably in writing, should be obtained from the proprietor in advance of the work starting. The use of public toilets is acceptable only where it is impractical to provide or make available other facilities.
1b Portable water flushing units with water bowser supplies and waste storage tanks.	
2 Portable installation on site.	Consisting of chemical toilet(s), washing facilities and sufficient tables and seating.
3 Suitably designed vehicle.	Consisting of chemical toilet(s), washing facilities and sufficient tables and seating.
4 Facilities which are conveniently accessible to the worksite (includes public toilets).	Use of public toilets is acceptable only where it is impractical to provide or make available other facilities.
5 Portable installation near site.	Incorporating a chemical toilet, washing facilities and sufficient tables and seating.

References

1 *Managing health and safety in construction. Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007. Approved Code of Practice L144* HSE Books 2007 ISBN 978 0 7176 6223 4

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the references listed in this publication, their future availability cannot be guaranteed.

Further reading

Health and safety in construction HSG150 (Third edition) HSE Books 2006 ISBN 978 0 7176 6182 4
Fire safety in construction work HSG168 HSE Books 2010 ISBN 978 0 7176 6345 3

BS 6465-1: 2006 *Sanitary installations. Code of practice for the design of sanitary facilities and scales of provision of sanitary and associated appliances*

Further information

Visit www.hse.gov.uk/construction for more specific information on CDM 2007 and health and safety in the construction industry, including a link to additional guidance for CDM dutyholders developed by the construction industry.

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This information sheet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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