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Height Safety News



January 2016

Dear Test First Name

Welcome to the first Height Safety News of 2016.

Happy New Year to you all .. let's look forward to improving Work at Height in 2016.

This month we ask if the Method Statement is really worth the effort, we suggest a new year's resolution to ask more of the Supervisor, we question the best method of low level access, and we suggest use of a free construction safety information website, [PP Construction Safety](#).



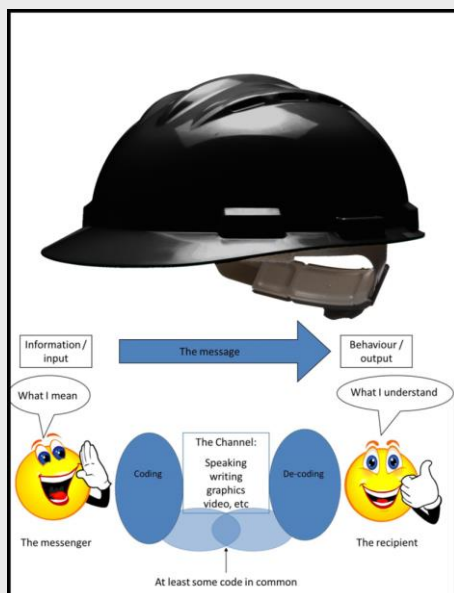
My understanding of the process to develop a safe system of work is, identify the Hazards, Assess the risks, and then develop a Method Statement that manages the

risks to an acceptable level. The Method Statement has been a key part of our site safety documentation since the 80's, but does it add any value ? In many cases the MS is now a huge and cumbersome "novel" that is never seen by the operatives who have to deliver the work.

For me an effective MS could be a brief, concise document that tells competent operatives how to apply their competence to the specific hazards identified for an individual item of work. It will of course vary in complexity and length depending on the trade and task, but it should not be full of general information about the trade, or padded out to cover every possible variation for the duration of the project. The concept should be a task briefing document that is readily and regularly reviewed. An old contact of mine within HSE once told me, "we love a thick method statement when something has gone wrong. We go through it with a fine comb, and we always find something that has been written but not done. .. bang to rights." The MS is not a document referenced within Regulations, like the risk assessment, is it time for some practical re-thinking ?

Last August, Judith Hackett said, "we are concerned that a focus on the risk assessment **paperwork** is completely out of line with the HSE emphasis on managing risks. Thinking about risks and doing something about the really serious ones is what HSE require people to do."

Interesting ?



Supervision ...a communication role ?

The role of the supervisor is enshrined within Regulation and is vital to ensure the application of the works in



Platform Steps ?

I call this a platform step. The key aspect is that it is not possible to

the manner that was planned. Their role is to supervise and direct the activity of the operatives, and as such they need to be both experienced in the activity and also be "leaders." Confident to own the responsibility.

On many sites we even give them black hats to make them stand out.... but do we really ask enough of the "black hats" ?

I was recently investigating a significant and serious near miss. I watched the trade (scaffolding) working, and noted that they neither followed accepted current practice (which has changed significantly in recent years), nor did they follow their own method statement. I approached the "black hat" who immediately told me he "had been doing this for over 20 years." When I asked about the specifics his reply was "these guys have also been doing it a long time .. you don't expect me to tell them how to work do you ?"

If we are serious about making changes we need to start with the Supervisor .. and I think we need to expect more from them.

climb too high, as the stiles extend about 1m above the top platform. They tend to be more heavily built than the "domestic" step ladder that attracts so much concern, and are therefore more stable (some have legs).. They have a smaller footprint, are easier to move, and are less likely to damage finishings than a podium. Are they a better idea ?

We have put significant restriction on the use of steps/ladders for many wise reasons, but we now seem to finish buildings with either cumbersome podiums (which have a few problems of their own,) or we revert to hop ups (which are at the bottom of the hierarchy).

The "Right" solution clearly depends on the activity and application. In my experience there appears to be little consistency within a given site/contractor. Each access method has its strong suits, and that perhaps implies a need for better guidance and more consistency. I regularly see the same trade, on the same site, using three or four different types of low level access equipment. If an incident were to occur, the lack of "management" would attract attention.

An Idea ...

For many years I have used the services of PP Construction Safety to keep me up to date with all that is going on. Phil Pointer is an ex HSE Principle Inspector (Luton), and has vast detailed knowledge of the workings of the HSE in Construction. He runs a website that gives a weekly "heads up" on events, prosecutions, and regulation changes etc .. access to the update is now free !!

PP Construction Safety.

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