

Green ticks all round

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Health and safety Sonia Soltani reports on how the BCSA is coming to the rescue of small contractors and explains why the Steel Construction Institute's Trojan Horse is a welcome gift

Hazard wizards

The British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA) has launched the Safety in Steel Construction Health and Safety Service (SiSC) to provide assistance to employers in complying with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work regulations.

This follows the announcement by the Health and Safety Executive that prosecutions by its inspectors have increased by over 20% since March 2006 after an audit revealed inspectors might have been under-prosecuting in recent years.

The service is targeted at small and medium-sized companies, but available to all. It enables subscribers to quote SiSC as the "competent person" safety adviser on any tender documentation, which will be required by the new CDM regulations coming into force in April.

The service is also suitable for companies that require specific assistance and includes regular visits from advisers, a 24-hour telephone service and fire risk assessments. The advisers can also train staff to carry out risk assessment. Also available are six half-day site visits every year, the results of which are presented in a report.

The service costs £2,500 per year. Members will be able to request additional services such as reports on serious accidents and tailored training. More details are available on www.steelconstruction.org

A steel horse

The Steel Construction Institute (SCI) is inviting construction companies to take part in the Trojan Horse initiative, based on the idea that awareness of health and safety can increase with exposure to pictorial messages placed on construction components.

It was initially set up to overcome the language barrier migrant workers experience when confronted with health and safety guidance. Poor knowledge of English is a principal factor in site accidents. The images simply show two actions – the safe one gets a green tick, the dangerous one a red cross.

Viken Chinien, principal engineer at the independent research organisation says that about 150 construction operatives surveyed on 11 sites found the initiative useful.

He says: "The pictorial representation is a clear, eye-catching message delivered at the point of use on the components so operatives can see them before starting an activity."

The project has been supported for the past two years by the Health and Safety Executive and companies including Taylor Woodrow, Multiplex, Skanska, Mace and Bovis Lend Lease.

Steve Derbyshire, acting head of health and safety for Taylor Woodrow, says: "By displaying posters on construction components it provides the right information where the work is. Not via the notice board, which is often ignored or walked by."

Chinien says that the £40,000 budget and short-term span of the research means the SCI have yet to evaluate the change in accident rates, but he says observations from site managers suggest a positive impact.

This year the SCI wishes to reach manufacturers and companies to develop a website, site toolkits and peer reviews of the approach. The website will make the posters more readily available and will analyse the implications of the initiative on different sectors within the industry. Chinien says: "We want to make Trojan Horse effective as a common tool, particularly among SMEs and smaller sub-contractors."

Postscript :

For more details, log on to www.steel-sci.org

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