

TR JAN H RSE

HEALTH & SAFETY MESSAGING

The construction industry employs just over 6% of the UK workforce but accounts for over 30% of the fatal injuries and more than 14% of the major injuries. Despite repeated high-profile initiatives, 2006/07 witnessed a 28% increase on the previous year's toll of construction fatalities.

Conventional posters on notice boards produce a wallpaper effect that eventually stops people noticing the key messages. Their lack of effectiveness is on the one hand due to literacy problems; a report from the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee in January 2006 stated that about 12 million working adults in the UK have literacy skills below those of an 11 year old. On the other hand, the changing

profile of the UK construction workforce now includes a large number of migrant workers, unfamiliar with language, local working practices and safety cultures. This heightens the need to find new and effective ways of conveying health and safety information to workers on construction sites and was the driving force behind the development of a new health and safety messaging technique (Trojan Horse messaging).



“We believe that the messages can be used as part of a health & safety strategy to deliver a safer construction industry”

Bill Callaghan,
Former Chair of the Health & Safety Commission

A picture says a thousand words



Examples of Trojan Horse messages

Trojan Horse messages convey good practice safety information through eye-catching pictorial messages on brightly coloured backgrounds. These show safe and unsafe ways of carrying out a task with a green tick

and a red cross (see above) – universally agreed symbols for right and wrong. They are applicable to all types of projects and do not interfere with the construction process.

At point of use

Trojan Horse messages cannot go unnoticed; they are applied onto the construction component or equipment being used. This means that the operative sees the message just as he is about to carry out the task.

The messages are applied to the products at the factory. Site managers are generally too busy and do not necessarily have time to go around the site attaching messages to products. By getting product manufacturers involved in the application of the messages, it is easier and more likely that the messages will also reach the smallest contractors.



Why do they work?

The success of Trojan Horse messaging in improving overall site safety lies in its simplicity:

- **Pictorial rather than textual messages**
Inability to read or understand English is not a problem.
- **Strategic timing of messages**
Can be used in targeted campaigns to deliver Health & Safety information on topical issues.
- **Clear and simple**
Unambiguous illustration of safe and unsafe practices.
- **Positive reinforcement**
Increase operatives' confidence in carrying out the activity shown in the message.
- **Eye catching**
High visual impact and easily seen by operatives.
- **Cost effective**
No need for a bureaucratic or technical system to implement it.
- **Information at point of use**
Timely reminder to site operatives of how to carry out the activity safely.
- **Safety barrier**
Last safety barrier prior to an operative carrying out a task.

“We are always looking for ways to contribute to improving construction health and safety. We believe in this initiative and are encouraging our product manufacturing businesses to commit to using this technique on their products”

Kevin Crawley,
Health and Safety Director, Saint Gobain Building Distribution

“That’s one of its major benefits – a properly designed message placed in the right place at the right time. The obvious question is why didn’t someone think of it before?”

Paul Thomas,
HSE Specialist Inspector (Construction)

How do we know they work?

Research carried out between 2004 and 2006 concluded that Trojan Horse Health and Safety messages are an effective communication tool in raising awareness of Health and Safety issues and in effecting positive behavioural change amongst construction site operatives. It involved steel, concrete and timber product supply companies, numerous construction sites and interviews and observation of around 150 site workers carried out by leading behavioural psychologists at Loughborough and Oxford Universities. The research had strong industrial support from several major contractors including Taylor Woodrow, Skanska, Mace, Bove Lend Lease and Multiplex.

As part of this validation exercise, messages were placed on products delivered to trial sites and surveys were carried out to assess

the impact of the messages. Applying the messages to the components was easy and did not affect site works. Results showed that workers were highly aware of the messages and that operatives on messaged sites could recall messages and interpret them with a very similar level of information uptake to that achieved when actually showing an operative a message.

The survey also showed that awareness of the messages, far from diminishing because of familiarity, actually increased after repeated exposure. In addition, there was evidence to suggest a link between the messages and safer behaviour on site, as the number of participants who behaved completely safely increased considerably with the delivery of each message.

“Responses of my own workforce were generally very positive, with the good and bad diagram clearly showing workers what they should be doing”

Steve Derbyshire,
Head of Safety of Taylor Woodrow

What next?

The current phase of work seeks to facilitate the uptake of Trojan Horse Health and Safety messaging in the construction industry. SCI is managing the project, with seven sponsors: the HSE, Taylor Woodrow, Morgan Sindall, North Midlands Construction, Saint-Gobain Building Distribution (which supplies building products), IHS (a provider of technical information and decision-making tools) and

Construction Skills (the skills council for the construction industry). The development team is engaged with a number of major tool hire companies and construction product manufacturers (including timber, concrete, steel and gypsum products) to broaden the application of the messaging technique. They have all been very receptive and supportive of this initiative.

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