HEALTH & SAFETY

1. SUMMARY

Safety in construction has been subject to concerted regulation for many years with a more or less continuous improvement in performance which continues. The result is that almost everyone in the industry understands the need for vigilance in safety, although there are still too many lapses from acceptable practice. There has been an increasing focus by the HSE on Health in construction in recent years. The consequences of ill health are well researched, but the industry, especially smaller companies and the self-employed, has yet to adequately embrace this as an imperative.

The social and economic benefits of better health & safety are clear drivers for sustainable construction, but many in the industry would not think of health & safety in this context. It stands on its own as an overriding and indispensable condition for the industry.

- **Understanding** – good  
  Industry practitioners are clear on the human benefits of H+S.

- **Practice** - fairly well defined  
  Large and medium companies and projects are very well versed in H+S. But at the mini/micro SME end of the industry practice is less satisfactory.

- **Measurement** – variable  
  Currently based mainly on safety statistics from statutory reporting. Health reporting is less advanced. Statutory reporting gives little substantive information for further analysis so that the areas for priority action can be addressed.

- **Controls** – regulations in place, enforcement reasonable  
  The HSE’s profile is high and there is constant engagement with industry. Also, industry generally understands that good H+S is usually associated with good project delivery. There is however concern at the gulf between larger companies and SMEs.

2. VISIONS AND METRICS

2.1 Industry vision

2.1.1 Published provisional/initial targets and metrics

The ‘Revitalising Health and Safety’ strategy statement (HSE, June 2000) set national targets for improving H+S performance by 2010:

- To reduce the incidence rate of fatalities and major injuries by 10%
- To reduce the incidence rate of cases of work-related ill-health by 20%
- To reduce the number of working days lost per worker for work-related injury and ill-health by 30%
- To achieve half the improvement under each target by 2004

The Review of Sustainable Construction (2006) replicated these targets, but set as industry’s vision ‘zero RIDDOR’ by 2020. (It also set as industry’s interim vision “2006; annual review” which does not appear to have meaning.)
This paper was produced with the help of comments and contributions from HSE, Arup and HBF. This does not imply that individuals or organisations necessarily endorse all views expressed in this paper.
Table 2 Assessment of current awareness and attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating 0 – 5 (see Appendix 1 for guidance)</th>
<th>Reduce fatalities &amp; major injuries by 10%</th>
<th>Reduce work-related ill health by 20%</th>
<th>Reduce lost working days from work-related injury and health problems by 30%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Established principles /sound science</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Widely understood across industry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Technically) attainable with no risk and no skills shortage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Cost-effective</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Compelling business case</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Strong Market pull</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Established metrics and performance data</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Degree of regulation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.3 Current performance and interim targets

Information recently published by the HSE suggests that steady progress continues to be made in reducing deaths and accidents. However, the improvement has to be maintained. There are balances to be reached with other sustainability issues, eg deconstruction for re-use may involve risky working at height; remote demolition lessens risks to workers but makes it harder to recycle.

DISCUSSION

- How attainable are the above visions by the target dates?
- Do practitioners understand what needs to be done to continue the recent improvements?
- Which, if any, of the policy, regulatory or industry initiatives that you are aware of are likely to have the greatest impact on continued improvement?

2.2 Published Government targets

2.2.1 UK targets

**Government target:** The reduction of fatalities, injuries, work-related ill health and worker days lost from H+S consequences. [Source: HSE Revitalising Health and Safety, 2000 and DTI Review of sustainable construction 2006]

**Metric:** Accident frequency rate

**Industry vision:** Zero RIDDOR

This paper was produced with the help of comments and contributions from HSE, Arup and HBF. This does not imply that individuals or organisations necessarily endorse all views expressed in this paper.
Progress: unclear (stated in DTI review as “2006; annual review”)
Achievement date: 2020
Primary responsibility: Individual clients; HSE
Mechanism for achievement: Process actions; training; formal mechanisms (codes & standards); informal mechanisms (best practice guides)
Secondary responsibility: designers; contractors

3. MECHANISMS

3.1 Policy and regulatory responsibility
The major government initiatives are through the HSE.

3.2 Industry and market drivers
Industry above SME level has largely adopted the regulations made by the HSE; adoption by SMEs is however very patchy. Contractors with fewer than 15 employees have about 44% of all construction workers (exc. professionals), but have 67% of fatalities, 57% of injuries and 61% work-related ill-health.

The drivers for improvement are (in no particular order):

- High cost of accidents and injury
- Workforce interest
- Publicity profile
- Client susceptibilities

DISCUSSION POINTS

- How much progress in the area over the past 5 years has been driven by regulations and how much by market/voluntary measures?
- How much future change is going to be driven by regulations / enforced policy compared with market / voluntary measures?
- What might industry do to continue or accelerate the improvements seen over recent years? (eg better focus on current initiatives; new activities)
- How might SMEs be motivated to adopt new and/or safer ways of working?
- What might government do to encourage further improvement?
Appendix 1
Guidelines for scoring Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principles</strong> established and practice within reach of most companies</td>
<td>Widespread understanding of principles across most parts of the industry</td>
<td>Technically attainable with little or no risk</td>
<td><strong>Cost effective to implement within present fiscal / regulatory regime</strong></td>
<td>Compelling and well promoted <strong>business case</strong></td>
<td>Strong <strong>market pull</strong> from both public sector and private sector</td>
<td><strong>Published metrics</strong> on current performance / benchmarking</td>
<td>Highly regulated, clear signals of future policy / regs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCORE 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCORE 0</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gaps in scientific / social / economic principles</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge and understanding across most parts of the industry non-existent</td>
<td>Technical risks / serious skills shortages</td>
<td>Not presently cost effective in competitive market or using conventional business case justification</td>
<td>Little in the form of case studies and evidence of <strong>business case</strong></td>
<td>Little market pull beyond regulatory minima</td>
<td>Little in the form of any current openly available data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This paper was produced with the help of comments and contributions from HSE, Arup and HBF. This does not imply that individuals or organisations necessarily endorse all views expressed in this paper.