

Appendix 2 to Matter 5: HSE press release - "One in three basement projects fail safety checks"; 17 Dec 2013.

One in three basement projects fail safety checks – Media centre - HSE <http://press.hse.gov.uk/2013/one-in-three-basement-projects-fail-safety...>



One in three basement projects fail safety checks

Date:

17 December 2013

More than a third of domestic basement projects in three London boroughs failed unannounced safety checks during a two-day clampdown, figures reveal.

The inspection initiative by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) last month, on 20/21 November, saw a team of inspectors visit 107 sites across Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster.

Enforcement action was taken at 36 of those sites – an overall rate of 34% – with 41 Prohibition Notices served requiring dangerous practices to stop with immediate effect, and 21 Improvement Notices served requiring safety improvements to be made.

The majority of the Prohibition Notices related to unsafe work at height, with dangerous excavations also an area of concern. Inadequate welfare provision accounted for three quarters of the Improvement Notices.

However, despite the clear evidence that domestic basement projects remain a cause for concern, HSE's lead inspector for the initiative believes some progress is being made.

The results show that contractors who have previously engaged with HSE in activity of this kind have made improvements – with the poorest standards identified generally amongst firms who were previously unknown to visiting inspectors.

Andrew Beal, Principal Inspector for HSE's Construction Division in the City and South West London explained:

'The overall picture is on a par with other targeted inspections of basement work, and we also identified the same kind of problems relating to unsafe work at height and excavations, and poor welfare facilities.

'That suggests the message isn't getting through, or that there is complacency towards health and safety across this sector of the construction industry. But that isn't necessarily the case.

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“What we found during the inspections was that better standards were usually at sites managed by companies who are known to HSE, a number of whom have previously received enforcement notices requiring improvements to be made.

“It illustrates that lessons have been learned, and we hope the latest failings that required action will have a similar impact.”

Domestic basement projects are technically-challenging and carry substantial risks. Common issues found during the inspections were:

- Work not properly planned
- Failure to appoint a competent temporary works engineer to design suitable propping to support excavations and existing structures
- Poor or absent welfare facilities for workers • Basic precautions missing, such as edge protection to prevent falls from height, especially into excavations

A number of the failings identified may result in prosecution for alleged breaches of health and safety legislation. The recipients of enforcement notices cannot be identified at this time.

Notes to Editors:

The Health and Safety Executive is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training, new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement. www.hse.gov.uk^[1]

Link URLs in this page

1. www.hse.gov.uk
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

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