

# European Construction Industry Safety and Health Coordination



A Paper by the International Safety and Health Construction Coordinators Organisation

## **Construction Industry**

Historically the construction industry in Europe had very poor health and safety performance. Research undertaken in the late 1980s indicated that this was due to poor planning and management of the works and a lack of coordination. As a response a European Directive was developed that required the appointment of construction safety and health coordinators for the project preparation stage and the project execution stage. The Directive describes the coordinator roles in legal language.

## **Coordination**

Safety and health coordination in the construction industry, as expressed in the European Directive, is a process of identifying and managing risks to help ensure that fewer construction workers are harmed. In the project preparation stage the coordinator is working with the client and designers to identify risks and eliminate them or reduce them and record those risks that remain in a safety and health plan. In the project execution stage the coordinator is working with the contractors to ensure that planning and preparation takes place to ensure that the remaining risks, including those of contractors working in the same place, can be adequately managed.

## **Preparation Stage Safety and Health Coordinator Activities**

The safety and health construction coordinator at the project preparation stage has three main activities, identify risks; ensure that they are considered; and communicate them to the contractors.

- Ensure that existing risks associated with the project are identified so that these risk can be addressed in the design and execution. Examples of the matter to be identified are:
  - Risks associated with the location of the proposed structure e.g. contaminated soil
  - Risks associated with the surroundings of the site e.g. children, other sites
  - Risks associated with the nature of the existing structures e.g. cracking, past fire
  - If the Annex 3 risks will arise on the project
  - etc
- Coordinate the activities of the designers to ensure that:
  - Identified safety and health risks have been addressed and eliminated/reduced where possible (GPP)
  - Introduced risks to construction workers arising from the design choices are as low as possible when they are:
    - constructing the structure
    - maintaining the structure
    - refurbishing/remodelling the structure
    - demolishing the structure

- The works of the designers is coordinated so that the structure can be built (clash detection etc)
- The significant risks that the designers cannot eliminate are identified
- Draw up the safety and health plan to communicate these risks to the contractor. As part of this communication process review the contractors' safety and health plan to ensure that they have understood the nature of the risks and made adequate proposals to manage the risk.

The nature of the coordination process changes through the project preparation stage as the definition of what is to be built moves from the conceptual stage to the point that what is to be built is defined in detail. In the UK the process of design development is illustrated in the Plan of Work produced by the Royal Institute of British Architects, RIBA.

### **Execution Stage Safety and Health Coordinator Activities**

The safety and health construction coordinator at the project execution stage has some key activities to ensure that the project can be carried out without harm to health and safety:

- Ensure that the safety and health aspects of the works of the contractors are coordinated
- Adapt the safety and health plan so that it reflects the proposed construction methods
- Prepare and implement the site layout – entrance, storage areas etc (Article 8)
- Make sure that the safety and health plan is applied on site
- Update the safety and health plan as necessary
- Act independently of the contractors
- Establish a coordination process
  - periodic meetings to discuss coordination of activities on site and upcoming activities
  - distribution of risk information
- Secure the site and the various parts of the site i.e. ensure that only authorised people are allowed on to various parts of the site
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that contractors are checking that their work is delivered in accordance with their safe working methods
- Collect and collate the information for the safety and health file

The safety and health construction coordinator does not carry out 'prevention' activities, this is the responsibility of the workers' employer or the self employed person

## General Principles of Prevention

All decisions made with respect to health and safety in coordination and on construction sites need to reflect the hierarchy of the General Principles of Prevention:

- (a) avoiding risks;
- (b) evaluating the risks which cannot be avoided;
- (c) combating the risks at source;
- (d) adapting the work to the individual, especially as regards the design of work places, the choice of work equipment and the choice of working and production methods, with a view, in particular, to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined workrate and to reducing their effect on health;
- (e) adapting to technical progress;
- (f) replacing the dangerous by the non-dangerous or the less dangerous;
- (g) developing a coherent overall prevention policy which covers technology, organization of work, working conditions, social relationships and the influence of factors related to the working environment;
- (h) giving collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures;
- (i) giving appropriate instructions to the workers.

## Coordinator capability

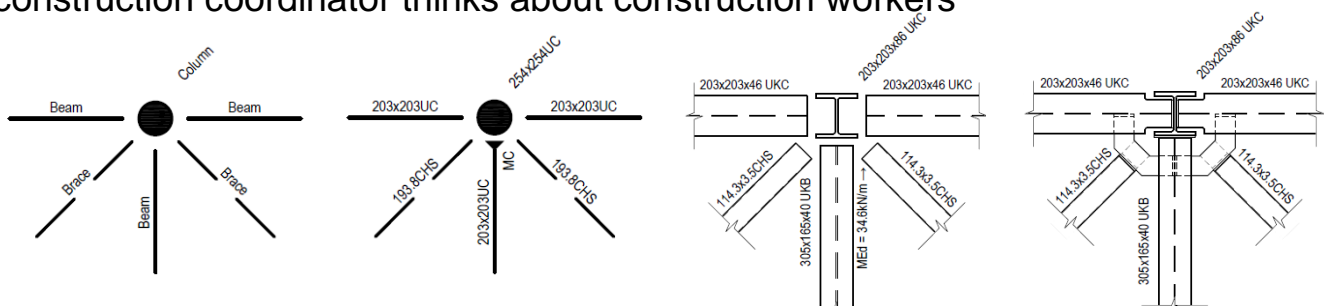
In order to carry out these activities effectively coordinators needs certain skills, knowledge and responsibilities and autonomies/competence. The capabilities relate to both the obligations that are placed on them by National legislation, derived from the Directive and the activities of the construction industry. It is not possible for ISHCCO to say in detail what skills, knowledge and competencies are required by National legislation but we have laid out what is required to fulfil the roles as they are described in the Directive and this detail can be found in the ISHCCO Qualification Framework, IQF.

## What a Construction Safety and Health Coordinator should know

A safety and health construction coordinator, regardless of whether they are acting in the preparation stage or the execution stage, needs to have a knowledge of construction techniques in order to make informed interventions with designers or contractors about the choices that they are making in relation to the General Principles of Prevention. Whilst this is outlined in the Directive, ISHCCO have prepared a Qualification Framework, using the European Qualification Framework showing the skills, knowledge and Responsibilities and Autonomy.

## Safety and Health Prevention

The responsibility for the health and safety of construction workers is not the responsibility of either of the safety and health construction coordinator, it is the responsibility of the worker's employer or if the worker is self employed, it is the responsibility of the worker. In carrying out their works the safety and health construction coordinator thinks about construction workers



ISHCCO Asbl - [www.ishcco.org](http://www.ishcco.org) - E-Mail : [info@ishcco.org](mailto:info@ishcco.org)

Forum Da Vinci – 4-6, Boulevard Grande Duchesse Charlotte, L-1330 Luxembourg