

Press Information



Scaffolding in focus again

The recent tragic events in Milton Keynes have again shown what a potentially dangerous activity scaffolding can be.

One key way in which scaffolding contractors can protect themselves from occurrences such as this is by the specification and maintenance of proper programmes of independent scaffold inspection. By law, scaffolds must be designed and erected, then inspected before first use and weekly thereafter by a competent person. It is the "competent" part that is open to question. Is the scaffolder who erected the scaffold deemed to be "competent" to inspect his own scaffold when time and cost pressures of a busy site impinge? In the majority of cases the answer is "yes, of course" - scaffolders, especially on major contracts are well trained and nobody wants to work on an unsafe structure. Events this week throw a different light, however. In the aftermath of a major failure such as this, one of the first questions that the HSE will be asking is "how did you know it was safe?", and will be looking closely at the inspection records. If an employee of the scaffolder or even principal contractor made the inspections, however properly, then questions may well be asked.

Safety and Access are market leaders in training and consultancy for the access industries, and offer a full, independent, scaffolding inspection service. Leaving aside the aftermath of a serious accident, the HSE are showing themselves willing to prosecute site owners who do not secure the safety of all staff on site, and with the new emphasis on collective over personal protection in the Work at Height regulations, it is more vital than ever that site owners protect themselves legally as well as physically.

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