

Review of Scaffold Inside Gap Initiative

Summary

As published on the website on 26 September 2018 which provided advance warning of a forthcoming initiative, the Health and Safety Inspectorate ('HSI') carried out a targeted initiative during the month of October 2018 to review the management of the 'inside gap' on scaffolds i.e. the side nearest to the building or structure.

The initiative focused on undertaking a series of site inspections to ensure that the minimum standards were being met, and that persons were not being put at risk of falls through the inside gap or being injured from falling materials.

During the visit, Inspectors also requested evidence of the thorough examination required to be carried out before the scaffold is brought into use and the record of weekly inspections for all scaffolds from which a person can fall 2 metres or more.

In total, 37 sites were visited across all 12 Parishes including 32 different contractors and 15 scaffold contractors. The visits comprised major and minor projects; domestic houses to large commercial projects; painting, decorating and general property maintenance, and sole traders to larger contractors.

In the majority of cases, advice and guidance was provided to ensure compliance with the legal requirements. Formal enforcement action, in the form of two Prohibition Notices, was required where the standards fell far below that required thereby placing people at risk of serious personal injury.

A further six Prohibition Notices were served in respect of other matters relating to unsafe working at height identified during the site visits.

Background to initiative

Following requests from the construction industry, and apparent confusion over the requirements relating to protection of the inside gap, practical guidance on the assessment of the inside gap and the requirement for internal edge protection was published by the Inspectorate in November 2017. This guidance is available on the HSI website via [Scaffold: Inside edge protection](#), and provides authoritative guidance on the minimum standards required to meet the legal requirements.

In essence, where scaffolding is used, the scaffold, including at the inner face, should have no gaps through which persons, objects or materials could fall and cause injury. Edge protection may be required at the inner face depending upon an assessment of the 'inside gap' and the work that is needed at the inner face.

This initiative was designed to review compliance with the standards following the publication of the Guidance Note.

Legal requirements

Work associated to working from a scaffold is covered by the general duties of the [Health and Safety at Work \(Jersey\) Law 1989](#) ('HSW Law') and Regulation 27 of the [Health and Safety \(Management in Construction\) \(Jersey\) Regulations 2016](#)

As well as guidance published by the HSI, reference would be made to authoritative guidance, including that published by industry trade bodies such as The National Access & Scaffolding Confederation ('NASC'). To illustrate the standards of best practice required to meet the general duties under the HSW Law, the relevant NASC practical guidance for scaffolding includes, e.g. *TG20:13 'Operational Guide'* and *Guidance and SG29:17 'Internal edge protection on scaffold platforms'*.

Findings of the initiative

The initiative identified a number of issues requiring attention including:

- an excessive inside gap without a safe system of work in place to prevent a risk of persons falling from the inside edge
- an excessive inside gap which failed to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any object and/or material from falling from the inside edge, presenting a risk of injury to persons

- absence of a certificate of thorough examination of a scaffold
- absence of a record of any scaffold weekly inspections.
- the failure to maintain up to date record of weekly scaffold inspections

Action taken

In most cases, advice and guidance, either verbal or in writing, was provided to ensure compliance with minimum legal requirements relating to the inside gap. However formal enforcement action was required in 2 instances to ensure the immediate safety of persons, with 2 Prohibition Notices being served in accordance with the HSI [Enforcement policy statement](#).

In addition, enforcement action needed to be taken in respect of other serious breaches of the legislation relating to work at height identified during the site visits:

- 1 Prohibition Notice was served for failing to provide a safe scaffold
- 1 Prohibition Notice was served for failing to provide safe access and egress to a scaffold
- 4 Prohibition Notices were served for failing to provide adequate edge protection whilst working at height.

It is also noted that a significant number of contractors, over 50% of those visited, failed to maintain an up-to-date record of weekly scaffold inspections in accordance with the legal requirements.

Work at height and the examination and inspection of scaffolds are likely to be the focus of future initiatives undertaken by the HSI so all contractors must ensure they are familiar, and comply with, the legal requirements.

Further information and guidance

Practical guidance on this assessment of the inside gap and the requirement for internal edge protection was published by the Inspectorate in November 2017. This is available via the following link [Scaffold: Guidance on the assessment of the inside gap](#)

Guidance on the Construction Regulations is available via [Management in Construction \(Jersey\) Regulations 2016](#).

Scaffold inspection record books can be obtained free of charge from the HSI or collected from the lobby of Havard House, Great Union Road, St Helier.

A thorough examination certificate template developed by the industry in conjunction with the Jersey Scaffold Association and HSI is available via [Publications | Jersey Safety Council](#)