

Health and Safety Executive site inspections

A practical guide for
site managers

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide home building site managers and supervisors with practical guidance for managing announced or unannounced visits by an Inspector from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). For many site personnel, an HSE inspection may be an unfamiliar experience, particularly if they have not previously been involved in one, so it is important that they understand what to expect and how to respond. This guidance will help to ensure site personnel understand the correct actions to take when an HSE Inspector arrives on site, ensuring compliance, professionalism, and adequate record-keeping.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The scope of this guide is predominantly for use on construction sites by site managers in the home building industry, but the principles could be adopted at any place of work.

3. Guidance

3.1 Unannounced or pre-arranged visit

- 3.1.1 Many inspections are unannounced, so when you have been made aware that one or more HSE Inspectors are on your site it is advisable to (i) notify the Contractors on site that the HSE is present and (ii) notify your line manager, director, Health and Safety manager etc. (text, phone call or email).
- 3.1.2 Sometimes inspections are pre-arranged for convenience. Should you be contacted by an HSE Inspector to arrange a visit you should also notify your line manager, director, Health and Safety manager etc. as soon as possible to ensure they are aware in case they wish to or are required to attend.

3.2 HSE inspector's identification and introduction

- 3.2.1 The Inspector should show their HSE identification (ID) and explain why they are at your site (e.g., routine inspection, incident investigation, concern). If they don't show their ID or explain why they are on site, then you should ask to see a copy of their ID and ask the reason for the visit.
- 3.2.2 Ask the inspector to attend the site safety induction – if they decline then add this to the notes (see below).
- 3.2.3 Begin to take notes and continue to maintain a transcript throughout the visit. An example of what to record is listed below;
- Date
 - Inspectors' time of arrival and time of departure
 - Inspector name(s)
 - Reason for visit
 - Details of the site locations inspected, the health and safety topics covered, comments made by the HSE inspector, including any instructions to do something, any positive observations and any criticisms they raise.
 - People interviewed by the Inspector
 - A description of any enforcement action taken by the Inspector

3.3 Inspection activities

- 3.3.1 Always accompany the Inspector. Answer any questions and queries raised by an Inspector. Keep your responses brief, factual and relevant to the question asked.
- 3.3.2 **Tour of the site:** Inspectors may wish to tour the site to observe the workplace, equipment, processes, and working practices. Accompany the Inspector throughout the visit and facilitate access to the areas they wish to inspect, providing any reasonable assistance or information they request.

- 3.3.3 **Document review:** Inspectors may ask to review documents such as risk assessments, health and safety procedures, training records, maintenance records, permits to work and accident reports. Provide the specific documents that are relevant to the inspection or what has been requested by the Inspector.
- 3.3.4 **Interviews:** Inspectors may talk to site managers, supervisors and contractors.
- 3.3.5 **Observation of work:** Inspectors may watch certain tasks being carried out to assess health and safety compliance.
- 3.3.6 **Questions:** Answer questions honestly and factually; do not guess or provide information you are not certain about. If you are not sure say you will check and get back to them later. Cooperate fully and answer all the questions you are asked, ensuring responses remain relevant to the scope of the inspection.
- 3.3.7 When requested by an Inspector, provide access to all relevant areas of the site (they have legal authority to enter).
- 3.3.8 If at any time during the inspection you feel uncomfortable or unsure about the HSE Inspectors' approach, communication, behaviour, etc. please contact your line manager, Health and Safety manager etc. and inform them of the situation and request their assistance.
- 3.3.9 If issues are found;
 - Take notes of what the Inspector raises.
 - Ask for clarification if you don't understand something.
 - Immediately inform your line manager, Health and Safety manager etc.

3.4 Enforcement actions that an HSE Inspector can take

- 3.4.1 The following list includes actions that may be taken by an Inspector;
 - Verbal advice: Minor issues can often be dealt with informally.
 - Written advice via letter: Areas for improvement noted.
 - Notification of Contravention: If they believe a material breach has taken place
 - Improvement notice: A legal requirement to remedy an issue within a set timeframe.
 - Prohibition notice: Immediate stop of dangerous activities.

3.5 Closing discussion and post visit actions

- 3.5.1 The inspector may hold a closing meeting or discussion to summarise their findings and explain any required follow-up actions. If they do not, it is recommended that you ask them to summarise their findings and make a note of the points discussed.
- 3.5.2 Review the inspector's feedback, report or letter.
- 3.5.3 With the assistance of your line manager, Health and Safety manager, senior director and relevant staff, assign responsibility and set deadlines for any corrective actions. Decide whether an immediate work stoppage is needed. If a Prohibition Notice being has been served, you must stop work immediately
- 3.5.4 Keep a record of what corrective or other resultant actions have been completed, by who and when.
- 3.5.5 Ensure you get authorisation from your relevant manager or Health and Safety department before sending any follow up information or communications to the HSE