

# Latest construction campaign to prevent ill health from moving and handling materials

- Around 42,000 construction workers suffer musculoskeletal disorder (MSDs) which can cause years of agonising aches and pains
- Serious aches, pains and strains can affect every part of someone's life
- Construction site inspections focused on moving and handling in materials throughout September and October



Moving and handling heavy or bulky objects on construction sites is needlessly harming the health of tens of thousands of workers every year.

Working in construction is a physically demanding job and many construction workers' health is suffering due to pain in muscles, bones, joints and nerves that affect every aspect of their lives and in many cases their ability to work and earn a living.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is warning construction workers that the long-term impact on their health can leave them struggling to stand, walk, or sit down.

From 4 September 2023, HSE inspectors will be carrying out inspections of construction sites, focusing on the health risks of moving and handling materials on site.

Supporting the inspections initiative is HSE's communications campaign 'Work Right Construction. Your health. Your future' ([LINK](#)), to raise awareness of the risks when moving and handling materials on site and provide advice for employers and workers.

Inspections in 2022 found widespread methods that can protect workers such as the use of mechanical equipment to handle large glazing panes, using small inexpensive air bags to help to position heavy doors when being installed, and the use of all-terrain pallet trucks to move blocks and brick-lifters to

carry bricks around site.

However, inspectors also found many examples of poor practice, some of which resulted in enforcement action, such as a worker lifting an 80kg kerb on his own without any assistance from machinery, lifting aids or colleagues, and a 110kg floor saw that had to be moved into and out of a work van by two operatives at a street works site.

The law requires employers to control the risks of ill health of their workers, which includes pain in muscles, bones, joints and nerves that can develop over time, known as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). However, in the most recent period an estimated 42,000 people in the construction industry suffered from a work-related musculoskeletal disorder, which can cause years of agonising aches and pains. This amounts to 53% of all ill health in the construction sector.

If moving and lifting is managed properly, a physical job on a building site should not disrupt every part of workers' lives.

Before work starts, moving and handling risks should be considered and prevented where possible at the design stage. Once on site, employers should talk to workers about controlling existing risks and make sure appropriate measures are in place, such as the right training, aids and equipment.

Matt Birtles, principal ergonomist at HSE, said: "It is important that the issue of manual handling is not downplayed. Serious aches, pains and strains should not be accepted as routine when working in construction. These can dramatically affect every part of someone's life – with sufferers struggling to get themselves dressed and undressed, and unable to pick up their children or grandchildren.

"The culture of a site may mean many people feel uncomfortable talking about these issues but if your back has gone or if you're in agony whenever you move your arms, measures need to be put in place to address the causes."

HSE's Acting Head of Construction Division Mike Thomas said:

"MSDs affect the lives of tens of thousands of construction workers and can lead to a lifetime of suffering. However, there are simple measures that can be taken to prevent this.

"Everyone involved in construction has a role to play in keeping people safe and healthy. We want everyone in the industry, from designers to contractors and their workers, to be aware of the risks associated with any moving or lifting task and put appropriate measures in place.

"The health of workers must be considered when planning construction work so that they can carry out their jobs without fear of injuring themselves or developing aches, pains and strains, including being provided with the correct equipment to lift and move materials safely."

**Notes to editors**

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/>
2. HSE has a tool which can be used by employers to assess the risks to their workers of ill health. It can be found at: [Manual handling assessment charts \(the MAC tool\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
3. More information about the HSE campaign, *Your Health. Your Future* can be found at: [WorkRight Construction: Your health. Your future – Work Right to keep Britain safe](#)
4. Statistics on the incidence of MSDs are published in the annual Labour Force Survey – [LFS – Labour Force Survey – Self-reported work-related ill health and workplace injuries: Index of LFS tables \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

Support for the HSE campaign, *Your Health. Your Future*: Geraldine Brammer, HCLG MSD lead and Occupational Health Leader, Europe, Laing O'Rourke

"Health in Construction Leadership Group (HCLG) is supportive of HSE's campaign as we know MDS's can have a huge impact on our construction colleagues and their ability to undertake their roles safely. MSD's also impact on our colleagues quality of life beyond the construction site, both from a physical and psychological perspective.

"Working collaboratively is imperative in supporting the understanding of MSD's. Within the HCLG MSD sub-group, we are working towards producing campaign videos for the construction industry to raise further awareness and drive meaningful action to shift the acceptable level of risk around MSD's in the industry. A united industry approach is an exciting opportunity ahead of us, showing joined up leadership which is meaningful and ultimately changes behaviours."

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## [Company fined after worker suffers life-changing injuries in fall](#)

A Cumbrian construction company has been fined after a man was critically injured falling 10m through the roof of an industrial unit.

Craig Dickson, 39, from Carlisle, suffered multiple serious fractures, in the incident on Heathlands Industrial Estate, Kingmoor Park, Carlisle, on 25 March 2022.

CK Steelwork & Cladding Ltd were the contractor undertaking work on the roof of the building. The roof was known to be fragile, and, at the time of the incident, safety nets were being erected below the work area, although this

work had not been completed.



Unit roof

Despite this, Mr Dickson was taken onto the roof by a supervisor to assess the job. While crossing an area of the roof that was not protected by the nets, he stepped onto a weak skylight which gave way, and he fell head-first around 10m onto the concrete floor below.

Mr Dickson shattered most of the bones in his face, hands, and wrists. He lost four teeth and severely damaged his knee. He spent six weeks in intensive care and was confined to a wheelchair for five months. Since the accident he has endured constant pain, and 17 months later is still unable to work; he will never be able to return to his former profession.

HSE has guidance on [working safely at height](#).

In a victim impact statement Craig Dickson said: “The accident broke every bone in my face and knocked out my front four teeth. This has made me have zero confidence and major anxiety, which I now have to see a psychiatrist for, every week. My nose was badly broken, which has left me with no sense of smell, and I have difficulty breathing through it.

“Before my accident I was a very physically and mentally active person and attended the gym on a daily basis and was a keen fell walker and liked to socialise. I am now left in severe pain and now have anxiety and I’m always anxious and find it hard, if not impossible to do anything like I did before the accident.”

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that CK Steelwork & Cladding Ltd of Barras Lane Estate, Dalston, Carlisle, had failed to take appropriate precautions to ensure the safety of workers on the roof.



Skylight roof

The company pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. They were fined £16,000 and were ordered to pay £4,462.59 in costs at a hearing at Carlisle Magistrates Court on 31 August 2023.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Michael Griffiths said: “This was a very serious incident, and it is fortunate Craig wasn’t killed.

“Work on fragile roofs should be planned and controlled, otherwise there is a very high likelihood of a potentially fatal fall, or one resulting in life changing injuries, as we have seen in this case.”

This HSE prosecution was supported by Jonathan Bambro and Rebecca Forman in HSE’s Legal Services Division.

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2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
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## School trust fined after children injured by classroom ceiling collapse

An educational trust has been fined after 15 school children and their teacher were injured when their classroom ceiling collapsed during a lesson.

Fifteen Year 3 pupils, aged between seven and eight, and their teacher had the ceiling collapse onto them at Rosemead Preparatory School in London, at around 9.30am on 15 November 2021. Tables and chairs being stored in the attic above were among the falling debris.

The children and teacher sustained upper limb fractures, cuts as well as concussion.

Emergency services attended the school on Thurlow Park Road, Dulwich, following the incident with the class teacher and several pupils taken to hospital for assessment and treatment. There were 16 pupils in the class but one student was by the doorway when the incident happened.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found items such as desks and chairs were stored in an unsuitable area in the school's attic. This area was not designed to be load bearing and led to the ceiling collapsing.

The HSE investigation also found Thurlow Educational Trust had failed to undertake any structural or load bearing capability assessments of the area being used to store the items. The trust had also failed to assess whether the area in question was appropriate to be used for the storage of these items.





HSE guidance can be found [here](#).

Thurlow Educational Trust, of Thurlow Park Road, Dulwich, London, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The trust was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay £7,116.31 in costs at Westminster Magistrates' Court on 29 August 2023.

HSE inspector Samuel Brown said: "This incident has resulted in injuries to multiple young children due to the failings of the school to ensure that chairs and tables were safely stored above their classroom.

"Schools should be a place where children can come to learn from teachers and one another without having to worry about their safety.

"Fortunately, this incident did not cause any more serious injuries, but the mental and emotional impact of such an event should not be understated.



“Employers need to take action to ensure that building stability and solidity problems are not caused through overloading areas not designed to bear weight. As proven, the failure to do so can have severe consequences.”

This HSE prosecution was supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Samantha Crockett.

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## **[Five HS2 workers injured in incident](#)**

Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are today (Tuesday 29 August) at the site of an incident where five HS2 workers were injured.

Work is underway to identify the cause following the incident at the Mandeville Road site next to Northolt Tube station in London, on Saturday 26 August. Emergency services responded.

Four people involved in the incident have been discharged from hospital while one worker remains in hospital.

HSE inspector Gordon Nixon said: "We are working with all parties involved. At the moment, we are making initial enquiries. If there will be a full HSE investigation, this will take time."

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