

Dutyholder: **Principal Designer**

The role of a principal designer

As the principal designer, you have responsibility for managing health and safety during the preconstruction phase.

What do you have to do?

1. Assist with project set up

Firstly, you will want to know the client's level of knowledge and experience of this type of project. A client who is unfamiliar with construction projects will need to be made aware that the CDM Regulations apply to their project.

You may be asked to help the client to develop their initial brief. This is a good way of outlining the client's key requirements and expectations for the project, including any limitations or restrictions, such as budget, planning constraints and timescales. This brief is likely to be developed further as the project progresses and may include specifications and standards, which will in turn help to outline health and safety expectations.

2. Assist with compiling the pre-construction information

The client is required to identify and obtain pre-construction information. You may need to assist the client in doing this and then collating it for passing initially to the designers and then to the principal contractor for the construction phase.

This information should be reviewed to identify any potential impacts on health and safety. Where you identify any shortfalls in the information, you will need to advise the client on how to address them.

You and the client should also agree when updates will be provided, as well as the level and type of information they would like to receive, for example whether they want to see a copy of the developing pre-construction information that will be issued to the principal contractor.

3. Co-ordinate the pre-construction phase

You should discuss with the client how you will manage the pre-construction phase. Meeting regularly with the client provides an opportunity to update them on the developing pre-construction information.

Co-ordinate designers

You have a responsibility to co-ordinate health and safety with all the designers, including temporary works designers. You will need to provide relevant information to designers when it becomes available. You should tell the designers what you expect from them, including how they will work with each other. You need to be sure that designs are co-ordinated between the different designers to identify any potential impacts on health and safety during the full project lifecycle, from construction to maintenance, cleaning and, where relevant, during its use as a workplace.

You must ensure that the designers comply with their duties during the design stage. You should talk to them early on to find out how they will consider health and safety and how they will review its effectiveness. This will help you to decide which elements of the design you wish to review in detail as the design develops.

Oversee design decisions

You are not expected to review everything during design development. You should focus your attention on areas where there is a high risk to health and safety, including changes made to the original design. You can do this by leading design review meetings.

Even if you do not have technical knowledge of all aspects of the design, you should be prepared to challenge the designers on their decisions and the process they followed, including any assumption they have made.

Once the designs are ready for inclusion in the pre-construction information, you will want to undertake a review of the health and safety information provided, such as any remaining risks, sequencing of the construction process, the details of a phased handover and statements about any assumptions and key decisions. Many risks may remain; if they are well known or expected by a contractor they do not need to be included in the pre-construction information but it is important that any unusual risks are clearly identified and communicated, for example on drawings.

This not only helps you to confirm that designers have considered health and safety in their designs, but it also helps to demonstrate to the client that you are fulfilling your duties.

cont.....

CDM REGULATIONS 2015

Communicate with the client

You should communicate with the client regularly, to provide them with updates on progress and to raise any potential issues, such as concerns that designers are not co-operating. However, you are expected to resolve such problems directly with the designers first, before involving the client.

4. Liaise during the construction phase

You must provide the pre-construction information to the principal contractor. This is required so that they can develop the construction phase plan to help them plan and manage the construction work.

Prepare the pre-construction information

To do this, you need to compile and review the pre-construction information to check that the information provided is appropriate for supporting the construction phase. It should be specific to the project and should not include information that a principal contractor familiar with this type of work would be expected to know. Examples of things to include could be particular risks identified on drawings, specific erection sequencing and any temporary support that is required.

Communicate with the principal contractor

You must ensure that the principal contractor receives the pre-construction information, including any significant health and safety issues arising from the original client brief, and any subsequent changes to the brief or issues identified by the designers.

You must liaise with the principal contractor throughout your appointment, communicating with them regularly to ensure that the design, including temporary works design, is co-ordinated. This provides you with the opportunity to raise any potential issues.

You should also support the principal contractor in obtaining responses from designers to any questions relating to health and safety.

You and the principal contractor should agree methods of communication with other contractors, as the principal contractor has a co-ordination role and may wish to be involved in the discussions.

5 Prepare the health and safety file

It is your responsibility to prepare and develop the health and safety file and ensure it is handed over to the client.

However, if your appointment ends before the project is completed, you must hand over the file to the principal contractor.

They will then continue to develop it and hand over the completed file to the client.