CONSTRUCTION SITE SECURITY

Under the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA) (the WHS Act), certain people have health and safety duties with which they must comply in relation to undertaking construction work.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS?

This fact sheet should be read by people with management or control of a workplace at which construction work is carried out.

WHY SITE SECURITY?

Unauthorised visitors, including children, may not be familiar with the dangers on a construction site and have no understanding of the risks that they may be exposed to once they have entered a site. These risks can include serious injury from falls from buildings, scaffolding or open excavations; protruding reinforcement bars; collapsing material causing suffocation or crushing; coming into contact with hazardous substances and plant, and so on.

DUTY TO PROTECT OTHER PERSONS

One of the main objectives of the WHS Act is to secure the health and safety of other persons against harm to their health, safety and welfare through the elimination or minimisation of risks arising from construction work.

A person conducting a business or undertaking has a primary duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of other persons is not put at risk from work carried out as part of construction work.

SECURITY OF A WORKPLACE

A person with management or control of a workplace at which construction work is carried out must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace is secured from unauthorised access.

The person must have regard to all relevant matters including:

- risks to health and safety arising from unauthorised access to the workplace; and
- the likelihood of unauthorised access occurring.

Examples to consider are the proximity of the workplace to places frequented by children, including schools, parks and shopping precincts; the extent to which unauthorised access to the workplace cannot be prevented; and how to isolate hazards within the workplace.

SECURITY FENCING

Fencing can be an effective way of restricting unauthorised entry to a construction site when hazards are present.
When a risk assessment identifies the need to isolate particular site hazards and the only way of achieving this is with perimeter fencing, the installation of a fence, either permanent or temporary, which is maintained until the work activity on the site no longer presents a risk to unauthorised entrants, will assist a person with management or control of the workplace to meet their duty of care obligation.

An unauthorised person is not likely to enter a construction site while there is a physical barrier such as a fence, rather than, for example, simply a warning sign.

Safety and security fencing should:
- be constructed from suitable, dedicated materials with no holes or gaps;
- prevent access under or through the fence during the construction period;
- be erected within the boundaries of the construction site;
- have fence fittings, including clamps, installed securely;
- have gates provided with the same level of security as the fence;
- have locks and chains fitted for added site security and safety; and
- be regularly inspected to ensure it is safe, secure and still fit for purpose.

Sheets of reinforcing mesh should not be used for site fencing as it allows adequate hand and foot hold for children to climb over it. The protruding ends of sheets could also result in penetrating injuries.

SITES WITHOUT SECURITY FENCING
If it is not practical to use security fencing due to restricted space or the fence creating an additional hazard, consider:
- barricading off the hazardous area with a suitable hi-visibility mesh barrier, using 1.0 – 1.2 metre high star posts;
- covering an excavation, providing the cover can withstand all loads likely to be imposed upon it;
- securing access ladders;
- securing hazardous chemicals; and
- placing warning signs identifying hazards on site.

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS
For further information refer to SafeWork SA fact sheet ‘Transitional Arrangements for Construction Work’.

Important
This information provides guidance on work health and safety matters. It may refer to legislation that has been amended or repealed and should not be taken as a statement of law. To ensure compliance with your legal obligations, you should always refer to the current Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations.