

## OH&S GUIDANCE FOR HOUSE BUILDERS

# WHAT IS ADEQUATE SITE SUPERVISION?

February 2008

Builders must provide the degree of supervision necessary for work on their sites to be carried out safely and without risks to health. In order to comply with OH&S law, the supervision provided by the builder must be **effective, meaning that it is clearly delegated, competent and timely.**

This guidance note seeks to assist builders to determine the adequacy of the OH&S supervision they provide on their housing construction sites.

### 1. Scope

This guidance applies to the construction, renovation or extension of:

- a) detached houses, and
- b) attached dwellings, separated from each other by a fire resisting wall, such as terrace, row or town houses, and
- c) boarding or guest houses and hostels or similar with a floor area of <300 m<sup>2</sup>, and
- d) ancillary buildings to the above, such as private garages, gazeboes and carports.

Note: The above are based on classes 1, 2 & 10 of the Building Code of Australia. Multi-storey buildings (i.e. above 3 habitable storeys are not included in the scope of this Guidance Note).

### 2. Who needs site supervision?

The builder's own employees need supervision. So do the builder's contractors and their employees. Visitors to site also need supervision.

### 3. What is meant by site supervision?

Site supervision means the general direction, coordination and oversight of the on-site work processes. In particular, OH&S supervision on housing construction sites involves:

- deciding when particular contractors or phases of the construction process can commence, and when it is necessary to suspend a process,
- providing the necessary coordination and general instruction for work associated with one process so as not to endanger persons engaged in other processes,

- upon becoming aware of a dangerous work practice or situation, issuing prompt directions necessary to safeguard site personnel and/or the general public from harm, and
- monitoring the general conduct of work for compliance with the builder's and/or contractors' OH&S procedures and safe work method statements (if required).

The builder's contractors also have a duty to provide the necessary degree of supervision to their workers to enable them to perform their work in a manner that is safe and without risks to health.

#### **4. What is clearly delegated supervision?**

For supervision to be **effective**, the supervisor should have the clearly delegated authority of the builder to:

- make prompt decisions on behalf of the builder
- issue directions on matters that could adversely affect the health or safety of on-site personnel or the general public, and
- in all other respects, act on the builder's behalf in discharging the builder's on-site OH&S responsibilities.

#### **5. What is competent supervision?**

Supervision is **competent** when the supervisor has:

- a general knowledge of the OH&S rights and responsibilities of the builder, and of those engaged on site, or providing goods or services to the site,
- a general understanding of the construction sequences, processes and work practices associated with the type of construction being undertaken at the site, and
- a general awareness of the hazards and risks associated with the types of materials, chemicals, plant and equipment used at the site, and an understanding of the minimum controls necessary to safeguard site personnel and the general public from harm.

Note: Safety supervisor training courses are conducted through the Housing Industry Association, Master Builders Associations and other organisations.

#### **6. What is timely supervision?**

Supervision is **timely** when:

- the supervisor monitors on-site work practices, processes and procedures, and
- delivery drivers, contractors and workers can seek and obtain the supervisor's direction in the event of uncertainty on what is required to safeguard health and safety.

Whilst the supervisor's physical presence on-site is the optimum way of ensuring timely supervision, full-time on-site supervision may not always be necessary.

Between site visits, supervisors can continue to exercise timely supervision by phone, fax, internet, and/or two-way radio communication.

If the usual supervisor knows they will be un-contactable for a short period, arrangements should be made with key site personnel to effectively delegate urgent decision-making responsibility pending the supervisor's return to availability.

## 7. Records of supervision

To avoid doubt, it is recommended that supervisors keep brief but clear records, such as:

- diary notes of site visits and verbal OH&S instructions, and
- copies of any written OH&S site directions issued.

## 8. Compliance with OH&S law

The advice provided in this Guidance Note is consistent with OH&S law in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, and with the National Standard for Construction Work.

### Further information

You can access other construction safety information and guidance from:

- The WorkSafe Victoria website: [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/construction](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/construction).
- The WorkCover NSW website: [www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au).
- The Workplace Health & Safety Queensland website: [www.deir.qld.gov.au](http://www.deir.qld.gov.au).

You can keep up-to-date with the latest construction safety news and information by becoming a subscriber to the free weekly emailed newsletter, *Safety Soapbox*.

To subscribe, go to [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/construction](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/construction) and go to the *Safety Soapbox* link.

### Acknowledgements

WorkSafe Victoria acknowledges WorkCover NSW, Workplace Health & Safety Queensland and the many industry stakeholders who worked together in the development of this publication.

The information presented in this guidance is intended for general use only. It should not be viewed as a definitive guide to the law, and should be read in conjunction with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

This publication is protected by copyright. The Victorian WorkCover Authority encourages the free transfer, copying and printing of this publication if such activities support the purposes and intent for which the publication was developed. WorkSafe Victoria is a division of the Victorian WorkCover Authority.

