



Advice for the commercial client when planning roof works

A commercial client is anyone (individual, partnership or organisation) who has construction work carried out for them in connection with their business, whether they operate on a profit or not for profit basis.

Under the CDM Regulations 2015, a commercial client is responsible for managing the health and safety of a construction project, from the pre-construction phase through to the completion of the project, in a way that adequately controls the health and safety risks of those who may be affected.

As the client, you are responsible for checking that any contractor appointed to carry out roof work is competent to do the work safely, and as working at height on roofs creates increased risks, thorough checks of the contractor will be required prior to appointment to ensure that they have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to work safely at height.

Selecting contractors

Understanding the work that needs to be undertaken will help you decide the type of contractor you will need and the type of competence you will expect them to have. The following questions may help you to decide if the contractor is competent for the work that is required.

THEIR EXPERIENCE

- What experience do they have of the type of work that needs to be completed?
- Can they provide evidence of past projects or references?

THEIR COMPETENCE

- Do their workers have the appropriate qualifications, training and experience? This is important if they are using work equipment such as tower scaffolds and powered access.
- Are they a member of a federation or professional body?
- Has their safety performance been accredited through schemes such as CHAS or Safe Contractor?
- Can they provide examples of methods of work or other relevant documentation to show they are familiar with the type of work that is required?

THEIR MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- What are their procedures for managing health and safety?
- Will the work (or any part of the work) be sub-contracted out to others and if so, how will they choose the sub contractor and control the works?

- How do they supervise and manage their site work?
- How do they monitor and check their own safety standards?
- How do they inspect and check their equipment (owned or hired)?
- Do they have employers' liability insurance?
- Are they consulting with you to understand about any known risks or your requirements?

Once you have selected a competent contractor, you will need to exchange information, including the construction phase plan and agree the method of work; both will need to be done prior to any works commencing. Pre-start meetings are a good way of ensuring that the work is properly planned and the correct controls and procedures are implemented.

Finally, you will also need to monitor the work throughout the project.

Exchanging information

It is essential for a successful project that you communicate and co-operate with your contractor so that the following points are covered:

- Establish who the contacts are and their contact details so both sides know the lines of communication for the project to enable any issues identified during the works to be resolved quickly and amicably so that they do not prolong the works. The contacts should be those people who were involved in agreeing the work, so they have a detailed understanding of the agreed requirements.
- Discuss the following if they are relevant to your job:
 - your site rules/induction.
 - fire/emergency procedures.
 - signing in and out procedures.
 - segregation arrangements.
 - specific site hazards that the contractor needs to be aware of, such as fragile roof materials; live electrics; location of asbestos materials; vehicle movements and process hazards; fumes and extraction.

Agree the method of work

The method of work should be in writing and the amount of detail included should reflect the complexity of the work to be undertaken and should:

- Be clear and concise
- Be project specific
- Identify and mitigate potential risks
 - Specify the method of work and precautions to take to remove or minimise the risk.
 - Identify how the work will be supervised and managed.
 - Type of access equipment to be used, such as powered access and scaffold towers.
 - Arrangements for delivering, moving and erecting access equipment safely.
 - How the safety of the access equipment will be checked.
 - What arrangements are needed to ensure the safety of people near the work, such as segregation, or exclusion zones.
 - Arrangements for dealing with specific site risks, such as whether a hot work permit is required.
 - Storage arrangements for materials and disposal of waste items.

The level of supervision a contractor should provide will depend on the degree of risk involved with the work and on the level of confidence in the workforce's performance. For example, an experienced team of employees carrying out work which is routine for them will need less supervision than workers who are less experienced or carrying out unfamiliar tasks.

Monitor the work

All contractors need to be monitored by you to make sure the agreed arrangements and precautions are carried out. The level of monitoring needed will depend on the risk level of the work and the extent to which the work may endanger your employees, your visitors and other people for whom you are responsible.

You will need to take the following steps:

- Before work starts, check that the equipment they said would be used is there and that agreed supervisory and segregation arrangements are in place.
- During the work, use the agreed method of work to monitor the work as it progresses. Are they using the work equipment and methods of work that are identified in the method statement and risk assessment? Are there trained people on site? If not, ask why and ensure corrective action is taken.

After the work has finished, review their performance to see if everything went as planned, so you will have confidence when choosing them for future work.



Further information

For more information on your responsibilities as a commercial client, visit the HSE website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/areyou/commercial-client.htm>

For more information on the benefits of selecting an NFRC member to carry out your roof works, visit:

<https://www.nfrc.co.uk/why-you-should-choose-an-nfrc-contractor>

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