

## Commercial client advice when planning for roof works

A commercial client is anyone (individual, partnership or organisation) who has construction work carried out for them in connection with their profit or not-for-profit business. Under the CDM Regulations 2015, a commercial client is responsible for managing the health and safety of a construction project, ensuring that work is set up so that it is carried out from start to finish, in a way that adequately controls the health and safety risks of those who may be affected.

As the client, you will be responsible for checking that any contractor you appoint to carry out roof work is competent to do the work safely. As working on roofs involves greater risks, you will need to make thorough checks to ensure that the contractor has the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to work safely at height.

### Selecting contractors

Identify the work that needs to be done. This will help you decide the sort of contractor you need and the type of competence you will expect them to have. Ask the following questions to help you decide if the contractor is competent to do the work you need them to do.

#### 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?
- Are they safety performance accredited through schemes such as CHAS and Safe Contractor?
- Can they provide examples of methods of work or other relevant documentation to show they are familiar with the type of work?

#### Their management arrangements

- What are their procedures for managing health and safety?
- Will the work be sub-contracted and if so, how will they control it?
- 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 asking you for any information about your risks or needs?

Once you have selected a competent contractor, you will need to exchange information, including the construction phase plan and agreeing the method of work; both will need to be done before work starts. Pre-work meetings are a good way of ensuring that the work is properly planned and controlled.

Finally, you will also need to monitor the work.

### Exchanging information

Make sure you talk to and co-operate with your contractor so that the following points are covered:

- Establish who the contacts are and their telephone numbers, so both sides know who to talk to during the job and any problems can be discussed and settled. The contacts should be those people who were involved in agreeing the work, so they have a detailed understanding of it and the agreed precautions.
- 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.

A good method of work will:

- Be clear and concise.
- Be relevant to the job.
- Identify the potential dangers.
- 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 segregation, 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 ought to provide will depend on the degree of risk involved in 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 they said they would? Are the 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.

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