



# Specialist Engineering Contractors' Group



## HEALTH & SAFETY STRATEGY

April 2007

[www.secgroup.org.uk](http://www.secgroup.org.uk)



# Message from the SEC Group President



**The Specialist Engineering Contractors' (SEC) Group is the focal point for the specialist engineering sector's initiatives aimed at improving health and safety performance across the industry.**

**Specialist contractors are involved in all aspects of the construction delivery process - design, installation/construct, testing and commissioning, and maintenance and facilities management. Because of this, firms in our sector are in a unique position to drive improvements in health and safety.**

What has SEC Group done since launching our first strategy document following the 2001 Health and Safety Summit?

- SEC Group's member associations have brought over 150,000 employees into individual competence schemes affiliated to the CSCS Scheme.
- SEC Group's associations have made health and safety the priority for their member firms through high profile safety initiatives, conferences, seminars and training, advice and guidance and toolbox talks.
- Through active membership of the HSE's working party revising the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007, SEC Group helped to improve the Regulations by ensuring that they encourage an integrated and collaborative approach to managing health and safety.
- Working with HSE and the Construction Confederation, SEC Group developed a ground breaking set of criteria for assessing contractor health and safety competence. These were incorporated into the 'Carpenter Report' to the HSE in November 2005, and are the basis of the 'core health and safety criteria' in the ACoP to CDM 2007.
- A Safe Site Access Certificate was launched at the HSE 2005 'Health and Safety Summit' to help improve on-site management of health and safety.

- The Respect for People Code has been summarised on "pocket-sized" cards and distributed to the workforce in the sector.
- A standardised format for notifying SEC Group of RIDDOR-reportable accidents has been produced and member associations have developed a core accident statistics response covering at least 75% of employees (for firms having 30 or more employees).
- Member associations within SEC Group have either established or are developing registration, licensing or qualification schemes that audit the health and safety performance of member companies.
- SEC Group has signed a 'statement of intent' with the Construction Confederation (see Annex 1) to work together to further improve health and safety on site.
- In particular, the two umbrella bodies will work together to implement priority health and safety initiatives, and to secure the adoption - by contractors and clients in the public and private sectors - of "core criteria" for the assessment of contractor competence.

The result of all these initiatives is that since the first Health and Safety Summit in 2001 there has been a marked fall in the accident rate in the specialist engineering sector.

SEC Group will continue to work to drive down accidents in our sector, but our parallel aim must be to ensure the health of our workforce. Occupational health is a key feature of our new five year health and safety strategy.

This Strategy, which will be reviewed annually by SEC Group's health and safety task group, will guide the work of SEC Group and its member associations up to 2012 - a year with particular significance for the UK construction industry.

**Lord O'Neill of Clackmannan**  
*April 2007*

# STRATEGY 1



## ACTION PLAN

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

### SEC Group will

- Produce a self-assessment screening checklist. This will enable members of SEC Group’s associations to carry out basic screening of their workforce.
- Publish, promote and distribute information about the risks from asbestos.
- Encourage SEC Group’s member associations to provide adequate guidance and, where appropriate, training, to reduce the risks from noise, vibration and/or manual handling.
- Work with others in the construction, refurbishment, and facilities maintenance industries to reduce the noise and/or vibration from items of plant and from powered tools.
- Liaise with the HSE to help SEC Group’s member associations, promote the use of HSE’s occupational health management model to their members.

**Work-related ill-health affects significant numbers of construction workers. Such ill-health can include back problems, the effects of vibration and hazardous substances on the body, as well as the risks from noise and the disastrous legacy of asbestos.**

We have a moral duty to our employees but it also makes business sense, in an industry with a generally ageing workforce and facing skills shortages, to deal with these issues now. For these reasons this key topic now features in our strategy.

The construction industry’s aim is to reduce the incidence of work-related ill health by 50% by 2009/2010.

### STRATEGY

- SEC Group Board will raise the profile given to occupational health amongst SEC Group’s member associations and invite them to do the same with their respective member companies; this will, in turn, increase the awareness of the incidence of work-related ill health.
- SEC Group will continue to raise awareness of the risks from asbestos in the construction, refurbishment, and facilities maintenance industries and amongst those that work in them; as there is evidence that many workers in the industry are unaware of what to look for.
- SEC Group will invite SEC Group’s member associations to provide improved guidance and, where appropriate, training; to reduce the effects on the health of individuals caused by noise, vibration and/or manual handling.
- SEC Group will support the development of an industry wide occupational health programme. It will encourage member associations to participate in this and to further reduce the risks to the health of its members by their use of appropriate software tools.



# STRATEGY 2



## ACTION PLAN

### SEC Group will:

- Assist its member associations to enable their respective members to achieve compliance with the core criteria.
- Work with public, private, professional and trade organisations within the construction, refurbishment, and facilities maintenance industries to persuade them to apply the core criteria.
- Monitor pre-qualification processes and contract awards to establish the use of the core criteria.
- Liaise with the Major Contractors Group (MCG) to monitor the use of CSCS (or equivalent or affiliated) cards, and to improve the system so that a card is only required for the individual's predominant activity.

## COMPETENCE

### Improving the health and safety competence of firms and individuals remains a key strategy.

The Approved Code of Practice for the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 recommends that health and safety competence is assessed using a set of core health and safety criteria. SEC Group supports this approach (see Annex 2).

### STRATEGY

#### Corporate competence

- SEC Group Board will encourage member associations to incorporate the core health and safety criteria into their own membership requirements.
- SEC Group member associations will encourage their respective members to meet the requirements of the core health and safety criteria; either by their own membership requirements or by being assessed by an external body.
- SEC Group will work with public sector authorities and organisations within the construction, refurbishment, and facilities maintenance industries to ensure that the use of the core health and safety criteria is widely adopted; so that contractors do not have to pre-qualify under a variety of schemes.

#### Individual competence

- SEC Group supports the MCG's requirement to hold a CSCS (or equivalent or affiliated) card for entry to site; as this helps to ensure competency since it comprises basic health and safety knowledge.
- SEC Group Board will encourage member associations to require individuals working for their respective members to hold an appropriate card (e.g. CSCS or equivalent or affiliated card).



# STRATEGY 3



## ACTION PLAN

## DESIGNING OUT RISK

### SEC Group will

- Work within the Specialist Engineering Alliance to develop health and safety “design gateways” for the sector, and then publish these for use in the industry.
- Use every opportunity to promote involvement of specialist engineering contractors in design teams as standard best practice for managing health and safety risk.
- Look for and publicise examples of effective methods of improving ‘whole life’ safety by design

**Studies suggest that 50% of accidents could have been avoided, or mitigated, through a suitable change in design. This suggests a clear need for greater collaboration in the design process; between consultants, project managers and specialist engineering contractors.**

Although many specialist engineering contractors carry out design work, many key design decisions are made before they can influence them.

All too often these decisions ignore the health and safety factors affecting construction and installation; as well as those relating to the later maintenance of the engineering systems, structures, products and facilities. To address this fundamentally important safety issue, this section has been included in our strategy.

### STRATEGY

- SEC Group will work with the Specialist Engineering Alliance\* to identify and produce health and safety “design gateways” for the specialist engineering sector; the application of these will lead to more workable designs and lower risks.
- SEC Group will continue to work with public and private sector clients to improve collaboration and to involve specialist engineering contractors within design teams as early as possible; this will then allow them to use their knowledge to reduce health and safety risks, and to improve productivity.
- SEC Group’s member associations will encourage their members to collect and report problems or incidents that could have been avoided if they had been ‘designed-out’; this will enable better advice to be given to design teams to avoid the same problem(s) in the future.

*\*Members of the Specialist Engineering Alliance are:  
 Association of Consultancy and Engineering (ACE)  
 Building Services Research and Information Association (BSRIA)  
 Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)  
 Federation of Environmental Trade Associations (FETA)  
 Specialist Engineering Contractors Group (SEC Group)  
 Association for the British Electrotechnical Industry (BEAMA)*

## HEALTH & SAFETY STRATEGY

## STRATEGY 4



## ACTION PLAN

## MANAGING HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK

**SEC Group will:**

- Keep the Safe Site Access Certificate up-to-date. In particular, making sure that it provides the *Principal Contractor* with information on what is required.
- Seek input to and endorsement for the Certificate from the HSE and from client bodies.
- Encourage SEC Group's member associations to monitor progress in achieving greater collaboration of on-site management of health and safety risks.
- Produce information for the workforce aimed at any key areas of weakness (possible examples may be housekeeping, slips and trips, PPE).

**Managing risks to health and safety remains a key strategy.**

Together with other regulations, the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 impose clear and precise obligations upon the relevant duty holders - including principal contractor and contractor - aimed at improving the site management of health and safety risk.

The SEC Group believes that there is still much to be done to achieve greater collaboration in dealing with health and safety hazards on-site.

**STRATEGY**

- SEC Group will promote and encourage the use of its 'Safe Site Access Certificate' in the construction, refurbishment, and facilities maintenance industries; this will reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings occurring and of mishaps on site.
- SEC Group will work with other organisations within the construction, refurbishment, and facilities maintenance industries to identify areas where improvements in the management of on-site health and safety risks can be achieved; as it is always better to remove risks where possible.
- Working with its member associations SEC Group will identify the greatest health and safety weaknesses within companies and where, there is no better guidance, produce information to address these.

# STRATEGY 5



## ACTION PLAN

### SEC Group will:

- Make its 'Respect for People Pocket Guide' freely available and encourage its member associations and others to use the information in it, either as produced, or by incorporating it into other publications or material.
- Work with its member associations to develop "core" lead indicators for the sector.
- Identify the best way to collect 'near-miss' and design problem information from its member associations.
- Require its member associations to develop use and communicate their data collection to accord with the lead indicators, 'near-hits', and design-related problems.

## CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

**We need continual improvement to meet our targets for reducing accidents and incidence of ill-health; this, therefore, remains a key strategy.**

Change and improvement will only happen through people, both management and workforce. Instilling respect and the right conditions to support their endeavours are essential.

Our statistics indicate an improvement in safety performance across the sector. However, there is now a need to set challenging targets for the sector to achieve a faster reduction in accidents and near-hits.

### STRATEGY

- SEC Group will work to develop "core" lead indicators for the sector from the core health and safety criteria contained in the Approved Code of Practice for the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007; this will give a clearer picture of problems in the sector and allow better measurement of them. These should include an occupational health indicator.
- SEC Group will review current accident statistics in the specialist engineering sector and in 2007 will set new targets for major accidents relating to the period 2007-2012 and work continually towards a zero fatality target for the entire sector.
- SEC Group Board will promote and encourage member associations to use its Respect for People Pocket Guide.
- SEC Group member associations will encourage their members to collect and report 'near-hits' (or 'near-accidents'); so that the sector can identify where action is required.
- SEC Group will continue to collate accident statistics for the sector to enable comparisons to be made; this will allow ongoing performance to be measured.



**ANNEX 1****TAKING FORWARD HEALTH AND SAFETY-  
CONSTRUCTION CONFEDERATION AND THE SPECIALIST  
ENGINEERING CONTRACTORS (SEC) GROUP****THIS STATEMENT OF INTENT IS MADE ON 15 DECEMBER 2006**

The Construction Confederation and the Specialist Engineering Contractors (SEC) Group agree that effective management of health and safety throughout a construction project and during the whole life of the completed building is integral to the success of any project.

In pursuance of this crucially important objective, we are committed to work together to:

- Agree mutual priority areas for improving health and safety on site.
- Support implementation of agreed mutual priority areas and assist in resolving any practical problems that may arise.
- Maximise the adoption of 'core criteria' for assessing contractor competence by major contractors and clients, including public sector clients.
- Encourage the mutual recognition of, and convergence towards, the core criteria by our members and those operating registration/ qualification schemes.
- Review annually this Statement of Intent.

Where necessary, the Construction Confederation and the Specialist Engineering Contractors Group will work jointly with other key stakeholders and construction professionals to achieve these goals.

**PARTIES**

1. Construction Confederation.
2. Specialist Engineering Contractors Group - comprising:

Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors  
British Constructional Steelwork Association  
Electrical Contractors Association  
Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association  
Lift and Escalator Industry Association  
SELECT (Electrical Contractors Association of Scotland).

**ANNEX 2****CORE CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING CONTRACTOR SAFETY**

**Many contractors undergo 'pre-qualification' or 'Stage 1' assessments from clients or major contractors when tendering for work. These assessments look for evidence of contractors' basic health and safety credentials. Unfortunately, many contractors have to prove their credentials time and again, to a range of clients or health and safety assessment schemes. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) "unnecessary bureaucracy associated with competency assessment obscures health and safety issues and diverts effort away from them".**

To help address this problem, the HSE has worked with SEC Group and others to develop a set of 'core criteria' against which they recommend competence should be assessed. The core criteria are based on the key requirements in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and they are included in the Approved Code of Practice to CDM 2007.

SEC Group fully supports the need for nationally recognised 'core criteria' for health and safety 'pre-qualification'. SEC Group believes that clients, major contractors and their own members will benefit from a universally recognised approach to pre-qualification.

These core criteria state clearly what contractors should be doing to meet clients' basic health and safety requirements. As such, they provide clients and contractors with a clear picture of what 'good' looks like. Other key industry players such as the Construction Confederation, which includes the Major Contractors' Group, and the 'CHAS' health and safety assessment scheme have also expressed their support for the guidelines.

The core criteria are not yet another health and safety pre-qualification scheme. They should, however, help to resolve the confusion and administrative burdens associated with an array of existing UK pre-qualification schemes. While clients and major contractors will find the criteria are a valuable guide for Stage 1 assessment, they can still ask for further information, if necessary, to ensure health and safety on-site (e.g. for specific types of work, or for 'Stage 2' enquiries).

In addition to providing essential guidance to construction clients and contractors, the criteria should also benefit other sectors, since virtually every company takes on contractors at some time. SEC Group also recommends that clients and contractors engaged in routine maintenance work or the provision of 'one off' services adopt these guidelines.

HSE emphasises the importance of using 'judgment' when deciding whether or not the evidence submitted meets the standards in the core criteria. HSE also reassures those making these decisions that, as long as the judgment is reasonable, and based on the evidence asked for and provided, it is unlikely they will be criticised if the contractor subsequently proves to be incompetent.

**AS SUCH SEC GROUP, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE HSE, ACTIVELY ENCOURAGES:**

- Clients and major contractors to consider the core criteria when setting their own Stage 1 requirements or when adopting a health and safety assessment scheme;
- Clients, major contractors and assessment schemes to improve mutual recognition, and convergence, between their various schemes, in line with the new criteria;
- Trade associations and other stakeholders to target their training and information to members to help their members to comply with the criteria;
- Trade associations to take the criteria into account when assessing the competency of their members.

## ABOUT THE SEC GROUP

**SEC Group is the representative voice for the specialist engineering sector. It brings together the construction industry's premier trade associations.**

**Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors (APHC)**  
**British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA)**  
**Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA)**  
**Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association (HVCA)**  
**Lift and Escalator Industry Association (LEIA)**  
**SELECT ( Electrical Contractors' Association of Scotland)**

These long-standing, effective and influential organisations represent a sector comprising over 60,000 companies and a workforce of more than 300,000. SEC Group seeks to raise awareness - amongst clients, professional advisers, government and the industry at large - of the critical importance of specialist engineering expertise within the construction industry. Moreover it aims to promote productivity, profitability and best practice throughout the construction process.

The SEC Group's constituent associations represent a wide range of engineering expertise including telecommunications, power and lighting, heating and ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration, acoustics, ductwork, plumbing, automation and control systems, security systems, data transmission, lifts and escalators, constructional steelwork and facilities management.

Sec Group's constituent associations work closely to define and pursue their mutual objectives under the SEC Group umbrella. The strength of the SEC Group lies on the cooperation between the associations as well as in the engineering synergy that binds the associations and their members together.

***"The SEC Group exists to promote an efficient and profitable specialist engineering sector, comprising qualified firms and a skilled workforce, able to meet the business needs of its clients with delivery of high-quality engineering systems, services, products and structures as part of integrated supply teams."***

(SEC Group Mission Statement)



**Specialist Engineering Contractors Group**

ESCA House, 34 Palace Court, London W2 4JG

Tel: 020 7313 4819 Fax: 020 7727 9268 Email: [contact@secgroup.org.uk](mailto:contact@secgroup.org.uk) Website: [www.secgroup.org.uk](http://www.secgroup.org.uk)