

Scaffold and Access Industry moves towards safer systems of work

Introducing innovation with safer systems of work and Best Practice improvement has been at the forefront of the agenda for many key players in the Scaffold and Access Industry. SA-FE (Safer Access – Fall Elimination), an association aimed at Health & Safety improvement and Best Practice training, has been driving the need for **additional**, **appropriate** and **specific** training in order to overcome gaps existing in current industry training.

Current industry guidance and practice relied upon, almost exclusively for the provision of a general system of work for Erectors of Tube & Fitting Scaffolds, mentions the existence of “Collective Protection” but does not detail how the options could or should be used within a system of work. Detail only involving the use of fall arrest is offered.

With the support of Major Contractor Group Members, the Health & Safety Executive and safety innovators such as Turner Access, Peri, Ischebeck Titan and Palmers, SA-FE have successfully completed the first Best Practice Industry Day, hosted by HBG Ltd.

The Best Practice Event, held on 2nd September 2008, was arranged to demonstrate to Industry improved practices for the Erection, Dismantling and Alteration of Temporary Structures, including System and Tube & Fitting Scaffolds, Aluminium Towers and Falsework & Formwork, using “Collective Protection” options.



Clive Johnson SA-FE Chairman outlines SA-FE aims



Stephen Hartley Health & Safety Executive provides the HSE viewpoint



Gary Gallagher MD Turner Access presents SA-FE Guidance

Approximately 100 attendees from different companies across the construction industry, including major contractors and local authorities, witnessed product innovation. Itinerary for the day included an in-depth presentation covering the need for more appropriate training in the use of scaffolding and access equipment, detailing Collective Protection options to ensure Best Practice Systems of Work. This was followed by Collective Protection demonstrations on several temporary structures. Featured in the demonstrations were External Telescopic, Internal Telescopic and Integral Advance Guardrails, along with other Best Practice methods.



SA-FE organisers plan for the Best Practice MCG Event



External Telescopic Advance Guardrail demonstrated on System Scaffolding



External Telescopic Advance Guardrail demonstrated on Tube and Fittings

Integral Advance Guardrail processes were demonstrated by Peri using the PERI UP T70 / T100 Guardrail System. In addition to this, avoidance processes were demonstrated using Falsework being erected from ground level to avoid work at height.



External and Internal Advance Guardrail demonstrated on Aluminium Towers



Falsework erected from the ground to avoid work at height

Major Contractor Group members and the Health and Safety Executive are now reviewing Collective Protection alternatives for systems of work, which enables duty holder(s) to comply fully with the requirements of 6.3 of the Work At Height Regulations 2005. Also being considered more fully is the enabling ability of Advance Guardrails, which if used properly, will prevent the risk of fall and thereby remove the unknown consequences of adopting a system of work, which exposes the erector, using harnesses, to the risk of fall.

The final word from Stephen Hartley HSE:—

Erecting scaffolding is a risky business - HSE Inspectors regularly issue prohibition notices for unsafe erection and dismantling of scaffold and it's a wonder that tragic incidents don't happen more often. In my experience contractors often condone unsafe practice even though the CDM Regs make them ultimately responsible; I see too many scaffolders chancing their lives at height and for those that do use personal fall arrest, few use the equipment properly.

Systems of work and Advanced Guardrail systems exist to enable scaffolders to work more safely, and new integral solutions are being developed. The challenge is to make sure that clients and contractors know about these solutions and scaffolders understand how to use them successfully.

I am delighted to be working with SA-FE, the NASC, MCG and manufacturers to help scaffolders work more safely. The SA-FE workshops are an important step towards making the scaffold industry a safer place to work.