

April 2002

Special Construction Skills Certification Scheme Presentation

This event was held on Monday 29th April at the Birmingham Medical Institute, in response to members' enquiries about the impact of CSCS on their business. We were fortunate to obtain **John Bradshaw** from the **Major Contractors Group (MCG)** and **Tom Gibney** from the **CITB** National Office to make the presentations.

John gave us an excellent view, from the major contractors' standpoint, of the benefits to all Employers, Operatives and Clients in the Construction Industry. Firstly, he told us that the 21 firms in the MCG carried out 35% of the work in UK Construction, which gave work to 300,000 employees in many more organisations.

The main reason for wanting to improve safety is that, last year, there were 114 fatalities in the industry and the Government, HSE and the clients were the drivers. The stark fact is that, despite all the initiatives over the years, there has been no 'step change' in the pattern of accidents. The MCG strategy is: -

- To reduce accidents by 10% per annum.
- To improve consultation with employees at the Site, Gang and Individual levels.
- To introduce a "No-Blame Culture"
- To establish a "Best Practice" Network.
- To review Annual Safety Performance Figures
- **To have a *Fully Qualified workforce by 2003!***

(This would have intermediate targets of 40% by the end of 2002 and 80% by the end of 2002 and would include foreign labour and involve Principal Contractors)

The MCG maintain a current list of all trades that are recognised as being covered by an appropriate scheme and this is freely available to firms in all building trades. The aim was to drive the coverage down the supply chain, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the CDM Regulations.

Tom Gibney then explained that the CSCS was actually controlled by a separate Management Board whose members are drawn from the following bodies: -

- Construction Confederation
- Federation of Master Builders
- GMB, TGWU (Building Crafts Section), UCATT Trades Unions.
- National Specialists Contractors Council
- CITB
- Construction Industry Council
- Confederation of Construction Clients

He went on to say that the CITB administered the scheme on behalf of this independent management board.

The aim of the scheme is to: -

- Keep a record of workers who have achieved a recognised level of competence and to provide a means of identification.
- Be available on a voluntary basis to construction workers whose occupations are not covered by CSCS.
- Raise standards of Health and Safety to risks and accidents throughout the industry.
- Encourage construction employers to use skilled workers.
- Provide certification for workers that could be accepted in Europe.

Tom went on to explain the various types of card, which are available for specific categories of worker and what rules have to be observed to obtain them. All these are summarised on the insert enclosed with this Newsletter.

Members' Questions

Caroline Hurd of Vaisala asked what provisions were made for railway workers. John Bradshaw replied that Trackworkers were excluded because they were not considered to be involved in 'core construction' activities.

Chris Peck of W.S. Atkins Defence Services asked about the basis for assessing competence of Supervisors and Managers. Tom answered a competence profile had to be provided with the Application Form. Chris then asked what confidence had CITB got in the accuracy of the managers' references. Tom said that the confidence was based on a matter of trust and that if that was misplaced, then the comeback would be on the managers themselves if there were an accident or enforcement action. John Bradshaw then added that there were often signatures from managers on different sites to support an application. He went on to say that the Industry Accreditation route stops in July 2004

Terry Pardoe of Tudor Engineering then asked what was the cost of Assessments. Tom said NVQ assessments would cost £450, but that there would be a CITB grant available of £650.

Dalvinder Masaun of Sandwell Healthcare NHS Trust enquired about what publicity had been undertaken to persuade Clients to support CSCS. John said that this had been done by MCG lobbying involved groups of clients.

Tom made the general comment that the Touch Screen Test was an indication of awareness only. John agreed and added that CSCS was not a panacea for safety and that there was still a need for Employers to take action in a comprehensive package of measures. **Ray Cooke, Principal Inspector, HSE Midlands Construction Unit**

commented that CSCS addressed only general duties and that specific duties under HASAWA still applied.

Michael Rolls of Fitzgerald Contractors Ltd. enquired if there were any requirements for banksmen. John replied that they would still need a CTA Card and that CTA holders were to be affiliated to CSCS.

As there were no more questions the chairman, **Warwick Adams** closed the meeting and thanked the speakers for a most useful presentation which had cleared up any misunderstandings.