Managing Contractors and; Composite Insulated Panels

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A construction company with **specialist experience** in:

- hygiene critical industries: food, beverage & pharmaceutical
- temperature controlled storage, warehousing and logistics
- fit-out, refurbishment and design & build projects
- managing multi-million pound to small works projects as Principal Contractor.

Managing Contractors

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All of the following is for consideration about how the management of contractors, specifically for small works, maintenance, repairs or installations etc may be undertaken or controlled within your organisation or site.

Think of the controls you have in place and where there may be gaps or improvements to be made taking into account the consequences if they are not.

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Good Scenario:

- Small leak from pipework at high level within warehouse
- Beyond resources/capabilities of in-house engineers/maintenance
- Call in known contractor, or new, and show them work area
- They provide risk assessment and method statement
- You provide permit to work
- Work completed
- Job done
- Good times

Bad Scenario:

- Small leak from pipework at high level within warehouse
- Beyond resources/capabilities of in-house engineers/maintenance
- Call in known contractor or new, and show them work area
- They provide risk assessment and method statement
- You provide permit to work
- Worker falls from cherry picker because they weren't wearing, and had not clipped on, their harness
- The investigation identified a failure by the duty holder (building occupier, reviewer of RAMS and issuer of permit to work) to provide 'suitable arrangements for the monitoring and supervision of the works'
- Bad times

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Lets review:

- ‘Known’ Contractor:
  - Familiar with the company, site and personnel
  - Hasn’t had any previous significant safety issues/concerns
  - Familiar with the process of submitting RAMS and PTW

- What issues does that bring:
  - Complacency
  - Have they completed annual prequals, submitted latest insurance info
  - Have they had safety issues in the past but have they been overlooked
  - Are staff ‘accepting’ of the contractors RAMS because they always have been
  - Could new staff be reluctant to raise concerns because of ‘relationships’
  - Are the contractors left on their own because they ‘know what they're doing’
  - Complacency

Lets review:

- 'New' Contractor:

  - Not familiar with the company, site and personnel
  - Unknown safety history, performance
  - Unfamiliar with the process of submitting RAMS and receipt of PTW
  - Have they completed your prequal and submitted relevant documents including latest insurance information
  - Have they provided references of similar works/clients/sites and have they been checked
  - Do they provide all of the information but may be lacking on application ie all the gear, no idea

- ‘New or Known’ Contractor:

  - Who is responsible for sourcing? Procurement, Maintenance, Operations

  - Are they competent to assess suitability of appointment. Familiar with CDM Regulations?

  - Do you have a criteria that needs to be met for appointment of a contractor, large or small

  - Would an assessment be made at all if its ‘a small job’

  - Who is appointed to review the works area with the contractor and discuss the method of controls. Familiar with CDM Regulations?

  - Are the control methods even discussed or is the contractor left to it

- Controls:

  - RAMS, who is reviewing and approving

  - Are they competent to do so

  - Permit to Work, who is issuing

  - Are they competent to do so and is it robust

  - Is there safe access/egress to the work area

  - Who will demarcate the work area and how

  - Is the equipment they using suitable for the task and checked

  - Are they being supervised to ensure compliance to required controls

- Supervision:

  One of the most common failures in the safe management and control of contractors is making sure suitable supervision is in place or being undertaken to ensure the required and agreed controls are being met and maintained.

  - Does this mean a competent member of your staff needs to supervise the works?

  - If you're employing a specialist contractor to carry out works beyond your companies capabilities or resources why would you need to provide supervision?

  - If it is not constant supervision is it formalised that regular inspections, and by whom and when, shall be carried out?

  - If it is a high risk activity, why would you not?

'Supervision of contractors may need to be greater than that for permanent employees if the safe systems devised are to be complied with.' HSE

The Safe Management and Control of Composite Insulated Panels (CIPS)

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- Industry Guidance:

  Chalcroft are currently working with the BFFF, Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue and a number of other relevant parties to establish an industry guidance document on the safe management and control of in-situ composite insulated panels (CIPS).

- What are CIPS:

  CIPS consist of a inner core of material sandwiched between two galvanised steel sheets with a PVC coating for hygiene or aesthetic purposes generally used internally but certain types can also be used as external cladding or roofing. They have excellent thermal insulating properties, can be used in varying environments from ambient, chill to cold stores, are lightweight, easy to construct and generally are of low maintenance.

- Why the need for a guidance document:

  Chalcroft undertakes a significant amount of works (refurbishments, extensions, fit-outs etc) on live sites in, on or near buildings that have CIPS in place. Over a number of years I have regularly identified issues that left unaddressed could pose significant risk to life and asset.

  The common issues identified include:

  - Overloading of panels in roof spaces (plant, equipment, workers, materials)

  - Damaged panel hangars or joint fixings

  - Sagging/bowing panels

  - Build up of water/pooling on panels

  - Damaged panels following strikes from plant (commonly FLT's)

  - Inadequate or no edge protection around internal boxes (box within a box)

  - Poorly sealed or not sealed penetrations (by services)

- Risks:

  The risks and potential outcomes associated include:

- Overloading of panels in roof spaces	Collapse
- Damaged panel hangars and/or joints	Reduced structural integrity/potential collapse
- Sagging/bowing panels	Collapse
- Build up of water/pooling on panels	Collapse
- Damaged panels following strikes	Reduced structural integrity/potential collapse/risk of fire spread
- Poorly/not sealed penetrations	Reduced structural integrity/potential collapse/risk of fire spread
- No/inadequate edge protection	Significant fall from height

- Fire:

One of the most hazardous aspects to composite panels is the effect fire has in its spread, likelihood of collapse and subsequent loss of assets and risk to human life.

There are basically two types of composite panel cores crucial to determining the level and type of safe management and control required; Mineral Fibres and Foamed Plastics.

Panels with *non-combustible* cores (mineral wool, stone or glass wool, foamed glass) do not contribute significantly to the development of a fire. Their binders and adhesives may burn and char but the volume involved is not considered sufficient to sustain or contribute to fire spread. There is still a risk of delamination (where the metal facer detaches from the inner core) which causes greater exposure to the core, affects its structural integrity causing deflection and possibly collapse.

Composites with *combustible* cores (polymeric/plastics) when exposed to fire can spread quickly through the panels, melt and drip (depending on the type) and all have the potential to contribute to the fire load, delamination, produce black smoke and hazardous fumes during a building fire.

Panels that have damaged ‘facings’ caused by open penetrations through services or forklift strikes, expose the core and can assist greatly in the spread of fire.

- What may the guidance document provide?

  - scope
  - an overview of the types, properties and uses of CIPS
  - duty holder classification and responsibilities
  - legal and example insurance requirements to manage
  - frequency of inspections
  - how to carry out inspections
  - inspection competencies/training
  - fire controls/requirements
  - repair/remedial actions
  - hot work controls
  - risk register
  - technical document references
  - example inspection form
  - example poor practices/incidents

- Insurance/building regs/fire order code/supplier requirements (varied):

  - insurer assessment of *each* site that has CIPS to determine specific controls
  - annual thermographic assessments of electrical circuitry in *close* proximity to CIPS
  - protection from damage of *all* panels exposed to contact by FLT's/other vehicles
  - *regular inspection* of panels
  - up to date site plan detailing location and type of CIPS, support configuration (fixings – ie single face hangers/both, clipped to steel)
  - yard storage of combustible materials is not to be against or within *10 metres* of any walls containing composite panels
  - openings that once had services penetrating are to be capped with *metal*
  - a documented self-inspection programme is to be *in place* and any defects noticed *immediately rectified*
  - where combustible panels are present *replacement* should be considered at the earliest opportunity
  - penetrations should be contained within a *non-combustible housing* and opening sealed with *fire-stopping materials*
  - 'one man and his tools' per panel for 'occasional' access

- Check your policy requirements and discuss with your insurer.

- Your input:

  We would like to hear from you and what your organisation does to manage CIPS or; where you feel improvements can be made in the industry and where guidance would be beneficial.

  We have a questionnaire that can be completed, anonymously if you wish, and this can be found on the following link:

  https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/chalcroftcips

  Your assistance will provide valuable information we can use in the creation and support of the guidance document and its dissemination.

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Thanks

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