Glossary

Accident book
– this is required by law under the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1979. Even minor accidents need to be recorded by the employer. For the purposes of RIDDOR, hard copy accident books or online records of incidents are just as acceptable.

Assembly point
– an agreed place outside the building to go to if there is an emergency

Biodegradable
– the material will more easily break down when it is no longer needed. This breaking down process is done by micro-organisms.

Biodiversity
– wherever there is construction there is a danger that the wildlife and plants could be disturbed or destroyed. Protecting biodiversity ensures that at risk species are conserved.

Carbon footprint
– this is the production of carbon dioxide from burning or using carbon-based fuels, such as petrol, gas, oil and coal. It is not just running a vehicle’s engine but it is the fuel that is burned while producing materials and equipment.

Competent
– to be competent an organisation or individual must have:
  • sufficient knowledge of the tasks to be undertaken and the risks involved
  • the experience and ability to carry out their duties in relation to the project, to recognise their limitations and take appropriate action to prevent harm to those carrying out construction work, or those affected by the work (Source: HSE)

Contamination
– this is when the water has been polluted by some harmful substance or chemical

COSHH
– the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations are concerned with controlling exposure to hazardous materials.

Dermatitis
– this is an inflammation of the skin. The skin will become red and sore, particularly if you scratch the area. A GP should be consulted.

Formwork
– this can also be known as shuttering. It is a temporary structure that supports and shapes wet concrete until it cures and is able to be self-supporting.

Geothermal
– relating to the internal heat energy of the earth

HASAWA
– the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act outlines your and your employer’s health and safety responsibilities.

Hazard
– a potential source of harm, injury or ill-health.

Heat sink
– this is a heat exchanger that transfers heat from one source into a fluid, such as in refrigeration, air-conditioning or the radiator in a car

HSE
– the Health and Safety Executive, which ensures that health and safety laws are followed.

HVAC
– this is an abbreviation for Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning. This has been a service provided to many industrial buildings for a number of years, but it is now becoming more common in domestic dwellings, particularly new developments.

Improvement notice
– this is issued by the HSE if a health or safety issue involving the risk of serious personal injury is found and gives the employer a time limit to make changes to improve health and safety.

Infrastructure
– these are basic facilities, such as a power supply, a road network and a communication link.

Landfill
– 170 million tons of waste from homes and businesses are generated in England and Wales each year. Much of this has to be taken to a site to be buried.

Leptospirosis
– this is also known as Weil’s disease. It is spread by touching soil or water contaminated with the urine of wild animals infected with the leptospira bacteria. Symptoms are usually flu-like but in extreme cases it can cause organ failure.
Major injury
– any fractures, amputations, dislocations, loss of sight or other severe injury.

Near miss
– any incident, accident or emergency that did not result in an injury but could have done so.

Over 7-day injury
– an injury that has kept someone off work for more than 7 days.

Organic
– this means something is a natural substance, usually extracted from plants.

PAT
– Portable Appliance Testing – regular testing is a health and safety requirement under the Electricity at Work Regulations (1989).

PPE
– personal protective equipment can include gloves, goggles and hard hats.

Prohibition notice
– this is issued by the HSE if a health or safety issue is found and stops all work until the improvements to health and safety have been made.

Risk
– the likelihood that a person may be harmed if they are exposed to a hazard.

Service provider
– these are companies or organisations that provide utilities, such as gas, water, communications or electricity.

Shear failure
– when the load from the superstructure of the building bears down on the foundation. Underneath the foundation the soil will settle and there could be a failure of the soil to support the foundation. This will cause it to crack and part of the building will sink with it.

Sub-contractor
– an individual or group of workers who are directly employed by the contractor.