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 equally 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 species at risk 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.

Climate change
– the burning of fossil fuels (coal, gas, wood, oil) has resulted in an increase in the amount of greenhouse gases. This has pushed up global temperatures. Across the world, millions do not have enough water, species are dying out and sea levels are rising. In the UK we see extreme events such as flooding, storms, sea level rise and droughts. We have wetter, warmer winters and hotter, drier summers.

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.

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.

Ferrous
– metals that contain iron.

Fluorinated gases
– powerful greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

Foundry
– a place where metal is melted and poured into moulds.

Geothermal
– relating to the internal heat energy of the earth

Global warming
– this is a rise in temperature of the earth’s atmosphere. The planet is naturally warmed by rays that pass through the atmosphere; some are reflected back out into space. The atmosphere is made up of gases (some are called greenhouse gases), the majority are natural and form a kind of thermal blanket. The human-made gases are believed to make this blanket thicker, so less of the heat escapes back into space.

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.

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

Mark-up
– a builder or building business, just like any other business, needs to make a profit. Mark-up is the difference between the total cost of the job and the price that the customer is asked to pay for the work.

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

Non-ferrous
– metals that do not contain any iron.

Organic
– these are natural substances, usually extracted from plants.

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

Overheads
– these are expenses that need to be paid by the business regardless of how much work they have on at any one time, such as the rent of their builders’ yard.

Ozone layer
– thin layer of gas high in the Earth’s atmosphere.

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 involving the risk of serious personal injury 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.

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