

Guidance on Manual Handling

In December 2007 a large scale meeting was held with a number of representatives from various parts of the industry including, steel contractors, decking manufacturers, principal contractors, the MCRMA, the BCSA and the HSE. The purpose of the meeting was to review the manual handling risks during the installation of 'shallow' structural metal decking. It was established that decking sheets can vary in size up to 1.2mm thick, 1000mm in width and sometimes exceed 9m long. During 2008 a working party was set up to determine how these risks could be eliminated or reduced.

Over the following months the working party looked at several areas including design of buildings and decking, as well as the use of mechanical aids for the physical installation of decking. In addition, an industry wide fact-finding survey to gain the views of decking operatives was undertaken and analysed by the Health and Safety Laboratory.

Overall, the conclusions include that designers must take account of the potential manual handling issues and where practical, specify shorter/reduced width sheets where this does not increase other H&S risks. There is currently no practical mechanical method for the laying of shallow metal decking, however the degree of manual handling and associated risks can be greatly reduced by good planning, ensuring decking packs are correctly loaded out, off site cutting and good manual handling practice.

The working party have developed a number of guidance sheets (copies attached) for designers, contractors and decking operatives:

- **SIG.01 Manual Handling Survey** – A summary of the results and conclusions
- **SIG.02 Off Site Cutting Procedures** – A case study of the benefits
- **SIG.03 Material Loading Out and Guidelines for Principal/Sub-Contractors**
- **SIG.04 Manual Handling – Advice to Structural Engineers** – Guidance on designing out the risks
- **SIG.05 Manual Handling of Decking Sheets – Reducing the Risk** – A toolbox talk for decking operatives on manual handling good practice when laying decking.

In developing these guidance sheets consultation has taken place with the British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA) and the Metal Cladding & Roofing Manufacturers Association (MCRMA). The recommendations contained within the sheets are also endorsed by the HSE.

While the guidance sheets are being issued for use by the industry now, all should be aware that the HSE are currently preparing a construction Sector Information Minute (SIM). These will give directions to HSE Inspectors on the enforcement of the guidance sheet recommendations.

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