Toolbox talk

Working near the public

Keep the site in and the public out

10 minutes | For: Everyone working on sites next to homes, shops, roads or footpaths

Why it matters

Construction work can hurt people who have nothing to do with the job: passers-by, neighbours and children who wander onto site. The law requires work to be run so members of the public aren't put at risk.

Key points

1. Keep the site boundary secure. In busy areas expect a 2 metre high mesh fence or hoarding.
2. Stop anything falling outside the boundary using toe boards, brick guards, netting or covered walkways.
3. Keep footpaths clear. Blocking the pavement forces people into the road.
4. Plan deliveries so vehicles don't strike pedestrians coming in or out of the site.
5. Barrier or cover excavations, pits and open edges so nobody can fall in.
6. Children see sites as play areas. Assume they'll try to get in and make it hard.
7. At the end of each day, lock plant, remove ladders, lock away chemicals and close gates.
8. Keep unauthorised people off scaffolds and work platforms at all times.

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Do

- Check the fence and gates at the start and end of every shift.
- Stack pipes, rings and bags so they can't roll or topple.
- Plan how vehicles cross the footpath, with someone guiding them when needed.
- Keep materials inside the boundary, away from the fence.
- Challenge anyone on site who shouldn't be there, politely.

Don't

- Don't leave gates open or fence panels down, even for a short time.
- Don't leave keys in plant or ladders up scaffolds overnight.
- Don't throw or drop materials where they could fall outside the site.
- Don't block the pavement without a safe alternative route for pedestrians.

Ask the group

- Where could a child get into this site?
- Where do pedestrians pass closest to our work?
- What could fall outside our boundary today?
- Who checks the site is secure at night?

If it goes wrong: If a member of the public is hurt, call 999 and get a first aider. Make the area safe and stop the work that caused it. Tell your supervisor straight away. Some incidents involving the public must be reported to HSE under RIDDOR.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____ Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

Go further: HSE: Protecting the public, your next move (HSG151)

Sources: HSE: Protecting the public; HSE: Protecting the public, your next move (HSG151); Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 3.

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/public-safety**

Attendance register

Working near the public

Site / project

Date and time

Presented by

Company

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature

Follow-up actions

Quick check

Working near the public

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. Who must construction work be planned to protect?

- [ ] Only the workforce
- [ ] Workers and members of the public
- [ ] Only the client

2. Why is blocking the pavement dangerous?

- [ ] It isn't
- [ ] It forces pedestrians into the road
- [ ] It slows deliveries

3. What should happen to ladders on scaffolds at the end of the day?

- [ ] Leave them for the morning
- [ ] Remove them
- [ ] Lean them on the fence

4. What's the best way to stop materials falling onto a footpath?

- [ ] Work quickly
- [ ] Toe boards, brick guards, netting or covered walkways
- [ ] A warning sign

5. Why do sites need extra care about children?

- [ ] They don't
- [ ] Children see sites as play areas
- [ ] Children are always supervised

For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. Workers and members of the public

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires work to be run so people outside the workforce aren't put at risk, so far as is reasonably practicable.

2. It forces pedestrians into the road

HSE warns that blocked pavements push people into the road and into traffic.

3. Remove them

Removing access ladders stops children and trespassers climbing scaffolds out of hours.

4. Toe boards, brick guards, netting or covered walkways

Physical measures stop objects falling outside the boundary. A sign alone won't.

5. Children see sites as play areas

HSE says children are attracted to sites, so take every reasonable step to keep them out and away from danger.

Sources

- HSE: Protecting the public
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/publicprotection.htm
- HSE: Protecting the public, your next move (HSG151)
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg151.htm
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 3
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/3

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

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Lock it. Fence it. Check it.

1. Gates shut, fence intact
2. Ladders down, plant locked
3. Keep footpaths clear and safe

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Sources and qualifications

Working near the public

Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. HSE: Protecting the public

Boundaries, typical 2 m fence in populated areas, falling objects, traffic, excavations, children and security; all key points and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/publicprotection.htm

S2. Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 3

Duty to people outside the undertaking affected by the work; Why it matters.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/3

S3. HSE: Injuries to non-workers

RIDDOR assessment for public injuries: work-related deaths and qualifying direct-to-hospital treatment cases; emergency box.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/reportable-incidents.htm