

## INBOX CUTTING EDGE

The death of BSF gathers surprising responses, plus a scathing comment about our round

### Schools are too expensive ...

The number of people involved and the massive fees that are paid, no wonder the cost of the schools is off the scale. ("BSF was not just about schools", 16 July, page 22). Forty years ago the local authority would have designed the school using its own architects and the contractors priced it, with the lowest doing the project. How easy was that, and low cost?

Is it not possible to cut out all this "talking time" and the number of hangers-on, as it is now known what a good school building should be like? Just get the schools back on track and slice through the red tape. We should be told how much of the £55bn was to go on extortionate fees, the money for which could have built another few dozen schools.

AJ Marsh

### ... much too expensive ...

How many times does it have to be said? There is no money left. At the latest count the UK is £5 trillion in debt ("BSF was not just about schools", 16 July, page 22).

This figure is rising every day, and the country has not even begun to pay it back yet. It was wonderfully fanciful of Labour to make a wild promise of rebuilding every secondary school without the means to pay.

Of course, had they won the election they would have happily put the extortionate cost onto the country's credit card. However, it works just as well for them in opposition as they can play the "evil" Tory party card, claiming they are taking opportunities away from our deserving young.

Tom Howard

WE SHOULD BE TOLD HOW MUCH OF THE £55BN OF BSF MONEY WAS TO GO ON EXTORTIONATE FEES, THE MONEY FOR WHICH COULD HAVE BUILT ANOTHER FEW DOZEN SCHOOLS

AJ MARSH

### ... and best run by professionals

Working for parents and teachers? Hardly professional clients. ("Firms scramble to win work on Tories' free schools initiative", 16 July, page 11). Most would struggle with redecorating their living rooms, never mind delivering a major schools project.

Empowering parents and teachers is one of the coalition's more naive plans of liberating the people. However, the truth is these are future project disasters in waiting.

The local authorities were well-drilled and, in most cases, professional clients who knew what they were about. Parents and teachers? I wince at the thought. Good luck to those who choose to advise, they will need it!

Patrick Murdock

### Let's get falls to fall

Recently released Health and Safety Executive figures, showing that worker deaths were down from 178 fatalities in 2008/09 to 151 in 2009/10, are testament to the work of safety practitioners across the UK.

The fact that the UK has consistently held the lowest rates of fatal injuries for the last six years, compared with Germany, France, Spain and Italy, demonstrates the commitment UK industry has placed on moving safety up the corporate agenda.

However, although the prioritisation of safety is being taken very seriously across the board, we are noticing an increasing trend towards major injuries from lower level falls.

People can be forgiven for thinking that "working at height" relates solely to those in the roofing or scaffolding sector, but according to a report by the OBE Insurance Group, "59% of major injuries occur following a fall from height of less than two metres and 61% of over three-day injuries occur within the service industry". Typically, these may be falls from ladders, platforms, flat-bed trucks, and so on.

I am sure everyone would agree that even one fall resulting in a major injury or fatality is one too many. In 2008/09 there were nearly 5,000 as recorded by RIDDOR. As a supplier of height safety equipment to a wide range of industries, at Capital Safety, we have seen serious commitment from manufacturing, service and construction clients alike to promoting the safety of their workforce. However, there is still work to be done in the fields of training, education and reinforcement.

So, while a drop in fatalities is to be applauded, the fundamental question is: "What else can we all do to play our part in reducing the thousands of major injuries that occur each year as a result of employees falling from height?"

Daniel Vernuccio, managing director EMEA, Capital Safety Group

### Have glass, won't travel

Here's a new feature concept: "Building buys a pint for ... anyone outside London."

Yours up North and waiting at the bar,

Andrew Fletcher, director, Armsons Darwent Shaw



Michael Gove's cutting of BSF may have been cack-handed – but was it necessary?



## ✉ What do you think?

If you have views on anything published in *Building*, write to: The editor, *Building*, 3rd floor, Ludgate House, 245 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 9UY. Fax: 020-7560 4004. Email: [building@ubm.com](mailto:building@ubm.com). You can also comment at [www.building.co.uk](http://www.building.co.uk). We may edit letters

### Q+A FROM THE BUILDING FORUM

**Building's Forum regulars don't always focus on serious topics. This week, something from the busy General Chit-chat section.**

#### Q: Pencils behind the ear

Should pencils be allowed to be worn behind the ear or does one feel that this could be a serious breach of the health and safety policy and would one need to do a risk assesment?

**Rackman**

**A:** Depends on if you are wearing hard hat, goggles, gloves and safety boots.

**yelkcub69**

**A:** I would rather wear a pencil behind my ear than where the chief draughtsman threatened to put it when I made a mistake as a young lad.

**DHA Ltd**

**A:** It doesn't really matter in my eyes, but from a customer's point of view it could look unprofessional and may be dangerous?

**Richard123**

**A:** How can a pencil behind one's ear be dangerous?

**Socrates**

**A:** If someone fell over it could dig into them. Or if they dropped the pencil it could make it a risk if they tried to retrieve it from a dangerous/unsafe position ...

**Richard123**

**A:** Richard, you have clearly understated the potential risk. The pencil-wearing operative could fall over launching the pencil into a parabolic trajectory over the parapet wall of the roof. The pencil would then attain near supersonic speed as it descended towards the road below.

If the pencil had an H2 hardened engineer's lead it would then enter and puncture a passing fuel tanker causing a huge explosion in an inner city area, causing a catastrophe.

**TerrificTrevor**

**A:** A falling pencil from the ear is a fall from height and thus should have a risk assessment.

Imagine that one of your operatives is lying on the ground, working - you lower your head to have a look, and as he turns to look at you the pencil falls, pricks him in the eye and he is blind.

## A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Simon Whitehead spotted this instructive scene in Dulwich, south London, which demonstrates that the "oh, it'll probably be okay" approach doesn't always work out ...



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For more blunders and the latest health and safety news, go to [www.building.co.uk/healthandsafety](http://www.building.co.uk/healthandsafety)

So yes, a risk assessment is necessary.

To control the hazard I prescribe banning the wearing of pencils behind the ear on site, or issue all persons on site with goggles.

**onyourbike**

**A:** Would a slim wax crayon used in place of a pencil alleviate your profound fears?

**TerrificTrevor**

**A:** It depends from person to person. As Richard said, from a customer's point of view it could look unprofessional.

**punita\_london**

**A:** Nah - trust me Punita, customers won't care if you arrive nude, or with a Blobby suit on. All they are interested in is the lowest price, and then expect a Rolls Royce job.

**DHA Ltd**

**A:** Arrive nude with or without a pencil behind your ear? And Blobby has no ears. How the hell do you get round that one?

**PeeBee**

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