

✉ 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. You can also comment at 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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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

To join or start a discussion about sartorial preferences, go to www.building.co.uk and click on the Forum - then go to the General Chit-chat page