



Regulation, an aid for scaffold safety

Chris Nix sales manager
at Scafftag discusses the
importance of inspection
and compliance in
preventing accidents.

The changes to UK scaffolding regulations, which occurred at the end of 2010, could help prevent accidents, but only if they are properly followed and enforced, warns Chris Nix, UK sales manager at Scafftag.

The UK's HSE (Health and Safety Executive) recently released figures which indicate that the construction industry is the industrial sector in which the highest number of fatalities occurs. Although numbers are decreasing year on year, 42 people in the UK died in the period 2009/10.

To support the progression of safety within the construction sector and despite recent cuts in funding, the HSE has pledged to conduct unannounced inspections on construction sites over the forthcoming months in a bid to try to reduce the numbers of accidents as well as reinstate the importance of companies being compliant.

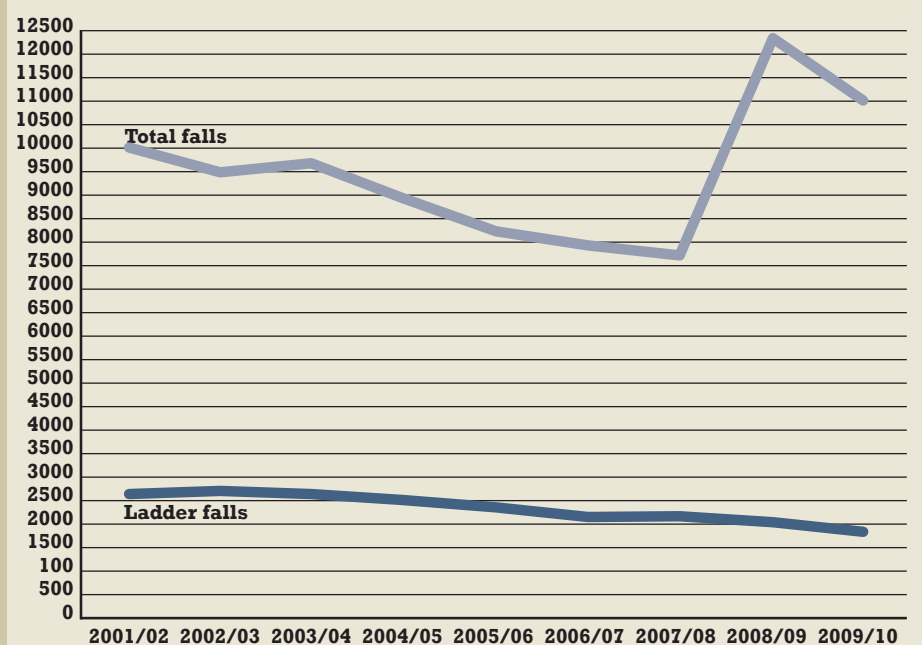
In addition there have been several changes in legislation since 2005 affecting

the scaffolding industry in order to make construction sites a safer place to work. In late 2010 the British Standards Institution (BSI) formally withdrew BS 5793 and replaced it with the European standard BS EN12811/1, which applies to all scaffolding, from the most basic to the most complex of structures, although primarily based on system structures.

BSEN12811/1 specifies six load classifications for prefabricated structures as well as guidance on materials and weathers. The TG20:08 has also been issued as a

Falls from ladders drop

FALLS FROM HEIGHT 2001-2010



Chris Ball of the Ladder Association promotes the correct use of ladders to prevent accidents.

The UK's HSE (Health & Safety Executive) has announced that the number of injuries involving the use of ladders and stepladders fell for the second year running despite 51% more falls from height having been reported to the HSE over the same period

According to the UK's Ladder Association, no one single initiative is responsible. The improvement has been achieved through a combination of initiatives driven by the association itself and in collaboration with other agencies, in particular HSE and the AIF (Access Industry Forum), of which it is a founder member.

Chris Ball, chairman of the Ladder



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Although the basic principles of BS5793 remain, the scope is wider and both volumes are essential in understanding the key changes following its withdrawal. The BSEN12811/1 for temporary prefabricated scaffold structures differs from BS5793 in that:

- There are now six service load classes, some with partial area loads
- Seven width classes
- Two headroom classes
- There is a requirement for a minimum unimpeded area along the full length of the working platform
- BS 5793 did not differentiate between loading on the main platform and the inside boards
- The definition of a scaffold classified as 'in service' and 'out of service' has been changed
- Wind loads on scaffolds must conform to BS 6399/EN1991

These changes crucially affect everyone who is involved in the design, erection and inspection of scaffolding structures, namely scaffolding companies, scaffolding design companies, major construction companies and scaffold inspection houses.

There are many implications with the changes, such as BS EN12811 now covering scaffolds erected in Scotland whereas the BS5793 did not. To ensure maximum safety, unless a scaffold is a basic configuration

described in a recognised guidance publication such as NASC Technical Guidance TG20 or the manufacturer's guidance for system scaffolds, the scaffold should be designed by calculation, by a competent person, to ensure it will have adequate strength and stability.

All scaffolding should also be erected, dismantled and altered in accordance with either NASC guidance document SG4 for tube and fitting scaffolds or the manufacturer's erection guide for system scaffolds. For scaffolds that fall outside the scope of 'Basic Scaffolds' as described in TG:20:08 Volume 1, the design information should describe the sequence and methods to be adopted when erecting, dismantling and altering the scaffold.

Scafftag products are designed to help in the management of equipment. In order to help those using scaffolding decipher whether a structure is safe or not, Scafftag has designed a range of inserts specific to either BS EN12811/1 or TG20. The system clearly identifies the key information such as loadings, records of ongoing inspection, ownership details and any potential hazards within the structure.

"Whilst a visual tagging system isn't a legal requirement," says Mr Nix many engineers have recognised the benefits of using such a system and adopted it as a solution to aid the safety inspection process, which is a requirement under law.

"As a result of a combination of changes to the scaffolding regulations together with Scafftags being used more extensively, workplace safety is improving." **SI**

technical industry guidance document, based on BS EN12811/1 but addressing specific issues when using tube and fitting scaffolds and is available in two volumes.

Best practice

Volume 1 specifies the four basic scaffolds for which no specific design is required, plus guidance on erection and dismantling, use and inspection. Volume 2 gives technical information and advice required for the design of scaffolds outside the range of Volume 1.

Association said, "Whatever the sceptics may say, it cannot be denied that these welcome statistics coincide with a significant increase in the number of users successfully completing a Ladder Association training course.

Since the training scheme was first launched in November 2005, the year-on-year increase - after an initial exponential growth in the first few years - has been consistent, growing at a rate of around 25% for the last couple of years."

Ladder training

The Ladder Association has launched and supported a number of initiatives including: *Don't be a ladder lightweight* aimed at experienced ladder users with a jaundiced view of training and the HSE's Ladder Exchange promoting ladder inspection.

"We have constantly promoted the message that if it's right to use a ladder, use the right ladder and get trained to use it safely," and that message finally seems to be getting through, especially when it's supported by campaigns like *Don't be a ladder lightweight*.

"We are also the first to acknowledge that HSE's Ladder Exchange has had a major impact in raising awareness and understanding of the need to inspect and maintain ladders

and stepladders to keep them safe for use. Actively supported by the association since its launch in 2007, the campaign has helped remove thousands of 'dodgy' and damaged ladders from the workplace."

"The Ladder Exchange has proved to be an excellent example of what can be achieved



when the trade body, the regulator and the industry at large work towards a common goal."

"Neither can the work of the Access Industry Forum be overlooked. Since 2004 it has provided an effective platform for the Ladder Association to address a wide and varied audience at events like the Safety & Health Expo and the IOSH Conference and Exhibition.

These have all contributed to driving home the association's message about safety and best practice."

"In tandem with other organisations, the association is making a difference. Promoting the need for training to hardened ladder users was never going to be easy. It's an educational process and that takes time. However, we're making measurable progress and the statistics seem to underline that."

In 2007/08 there were 2132 injuries from ladder falls; in 2008/09 there were 2011 and in 2009/10 and 1817. The figure of 1817 compares to 2631 ladder-related injuries reported to HSE in 2001/02, a drop of 31%. **SI**

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