



Defence
Infrastructure
Organisation

SAFETY ALERT

PART A

Subject: Inspection and Maintenance of Fixed Access Systems

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Who Should Read this: Top Level Budget Holders, Prime Contractors, Private Finance Initiatives, Public-Private Partnership and other traditionally procured contracts, Project Managers, Infrastructure Managers and Property Managers with responsibility for MOD projects and Property Management Works Services (including the legacy work of EWCs/WSMs), Coordinating Authorising Engineers, Heads of Establishment and Health & Safety Advisors.

This Safety Alert does not necessarily cover all aspects of the subject matter and readers should make themselves aware of other potential issues. Readers should also not rely on DIO Safety Alerts as their only means of becoming aware of safety issues, but they should consult widely across other media to maintain awareness.

When it takes effect: immediately

When it is due to expire: When updated or rescinded.

Health and Safety

Aim

1. To bring to the attention of appropriate persons the need to inspect and maintain fixed access systems including fixed ladders, walkways, gantries, staircases and fire escape installations, whereby the lack of appropriate maintenance of a fire escape stair has led to serious defects arising which may cause severe injury or fatality.

Introduction

2. Compliance with the contents of this Alert will enable compliance with the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and its subordinate Regulations.
3. The appropriate MOD officer shall arrange for the Maintenance Management Organisation (MMO) contractor to carry out all actions in accordance with this Alert.
4. Contractors and MMOs are to keep informed the establishment Health, Safety and Environmental Protection Adviser and 4Cs Duty Holder on behalf of the Head of Establishment regarding progress of actions required of this Safety Alert.
5. Any work required as a result of this Safety Alert must be carried out in accordance with JSP 375.
6. On MOD Establishments occupied by United States Visiting Forces (USVF), responsibility is jointly held by USVF and DIO (USF). At base level this jointly managed organisation is to take appropriate action to implement the contents of this Alert. Where this Safety Alert contains procedures, which differ significantly from USVF practice, DIO (USF) code of practice will be issued.

7. Background

8. Some fire escapes have been deemed unsafe making the upper floors unusable. Components have become detached on some structures with gaps in the balustrade inadequately "taped up" with PVC tape (see photo 1 below).



Photo1 Fire Escape showing PVC tape repairs

9. It has also been reported that some access ladders are in a similar poor condition with concern as to the adequacy of brackets and fixings.

10. For several installations, there is a lack of evidence that these are being inspected.

Requirement

Part A

11. Appropriate inspection and maintenance of fixed access systems is required to ensure compliance with:
- Health & Safety at Work Act etc. 1974
 - Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992
 - Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)
 - Work at Height Regulations 2005
12. The legislation requires:
- Any place of work and means of access to be maintained in a safe condition, in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair.
 - Buildings to have a stability and solidity appropriate to the nature of the use.
 - Suitable and sufficient assessment of risks to be made.
 - Work equipment exposed to conditions causing deterioration which is liable to result in dangerous situations is to be inspected at suitable intervals, to ensure that health and safety conditions are maintained and that any deterioration can be detected and remedied in good time.
 - Results of inspections to be recorded.
13. Further guidance is provided in the associated HSE Approved Codes of Practice and other HSE guidance publications.
14. Any manufacturer's requirements or recommendations should also be followed (PUWER ACOP clauses 53, 74 and 115).
15. Previous inspection records should be retained, for example to check for trends and potential recurrence of defects.
16. To comply with Statute, all access systems must be kept in a safe usable condition. Fire escapes are an example of this, and these are also subject to crowd loading being applied to the landings, staircases and associated balustrading.
17. All access installations should be risk-assessed by the MMO, to determine if it warrants specific inspection requirements; taking into account its age, known condition from previous inspections, local environment & exposure conditions, condition of support walls / structure, types of fixings used, range of users, how the access is used, implications of potential failure, perceived vulnerability etc.
18. Where a fixed fall arrest system is installed, this is covered by Serial 219 in the Hard FM Standards and Tasks schedule which states that inspections should be at least once per year, reflecting the requirements of PUWER and typical manufacturer's recommendations.

19. JSP375, Part 2, Vol.3, Chapter 7; para 7.3.25 states that for access systems not attached to a mast or tower, the inspection requirements need to be determined by the MMO's management plan, and this would include the use of risk assessments.
20. Users should be encouraged to be vigilant and to report any concerns or observed defects to the MMO.
21. It is expected for ladders and other fixed access systems to be inspected at least every 2½ years depending on manufacturer's instructions and the outcome from the risk assessment; for example, some ageing installations in an external environment may need more frequent inspections.
22. The necessary inspection and maintenance work is required by legislation as demonstrated above, and this work is included in the NGEC contracts which require the MMO to ensure the estate infrastructure provides a safe place of work that complies with all statutory requirements.
23. The MMO is to check existing fixed access installations and their associated records to determine their adequacy and confirm whether they provide safe means of access.
24. The MMO is to notify the DIO Service Delivery Performance Management Team – DIO SD-Perf Mgt Team (MULTIUSER) account, through their respective DIO Service Manager:
 - a. Which fixed access systems are adequate and which are not.
 - b. What remedial work is required for each if any, to ensure they have valid certification.
 - c. **A nil return is required for Establishments without fixed access systems.**
25. The requested data is required by 28 March 2018.
26. Further information will follow with the issue of **Part B** to this Safety Alert once the extent and scope of the affected estate has been established.