Why Segregate Scaffolds?

A drive through any UK town or city centre will reveal a large number of scaffolds erected on the public highway. Many of these are well constructed and adequately protected from potential vehicle impacts, but it’s also the case that a worryingly high number are built with little or no consideration given to the risk of collision by vehicles.

A browse through our Facebook gallery reveals many instances of this and many involve drivers who failed to notice the proximity of the scaffold to the highway.

Some would argue that a scaffold founded on a pavement should be safe, but the reality is that these structures should be protected from potentially adverse interface with vehicles.

Typically, incidents involving vehicles and scaffolding are caused by three combining factors, lack of adequate warning or protection, driver error or lack of driver awareness.

The Legal Position

The primary piece of legislation governing scaffolds standing on public highways is the Highways Act 1980, and specifically, section 169, ‘Control of Scaffolding on Highways’. The duty for enforcing this law is delegated to the Local Authority responsible for the geographical area in concern and as such, they are responsible for enforcing the use of Pavement Licenses.

Each Local Authority can apply such License terms as it sees fit and consequently, it is not uncommon for License conditions to vary between different authorities and geographical areas. A specimen pavement licence, as used by North Yorkshire County Council, is available at this link.

Other legislation applicable to scaffolds constructed on or adjacent to a highway includes the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015 and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and together, these laws place responsibilities on scaffolding providers and specifiers to ensure that the risks to users of the highway are controlled.

The considerations made at the planning stage of the contract should extend to:

- The need for a pavement licence
- Traffic management requirements
- Segregation arrangements
- Hoarding arrangements
- Lighting and signage arrangements
Practical Arrangements

Whilst the potential for impact at ground level must be considered, so must the potential for impact above the ground. Many of the incidents that take place involve the curtain side of a passing lorry catching a protruding scaffold tube so care should be taken to ensure that braces, ledgers, transoms and boards do not protrude excessively.

TG20:13 recommends that scaffold fans should be at a minimum height of 5.05m above the road and that scaffold uprights are 0.45m, but these distances can vary across different local authorities and should be checked prior to the erection of the scaffold.

In some instances, for example where traffic flow is very light and perhaps weight restricted, it may be decided that physical barriers are not required, but it may still be necessary to provide illumination to warn passing vehicles of the presence of scaffolding during hours of darkness.

Further Reading

NASC TG20:13 – Chapter 10
NASC SG34:17 – Protection of the Public
HSE – HSG151 – Protecting the Public
HSE – Guidance on CDM Regulations 2015
**Segregation of Vehicles & Scaffolds**

**Briefing Acknowledgement**

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