

Communication with Non English Speaking Workers

At least 10% of the UK workforce is made up of overseas workers, and this figure is higher within the construction sector.

This percentage has increased significantly over the last decade, and many of the overseas workforce who have been in the UK for a number of years have developed good English language skills.

It is important that ALL of those working for and behalf of the Sale Group (inclusive of Sale Service & Maintenance Ltd and Sale Maintenance Ltd) have a good understanding of the full range of health and safety issues that we come across, and that means we must have procedures in place to ensure that those with limited English language abilities are accommodated within our means of communication.

The following procedures will, therefore, be adopted.

1. Identification of Non or Limited English Speakers

During the induction process all attendees will be spoken to so that any non English speakers can be identified. If an interpreter with the necessary language skills is present then they will be utilised to provide a verbal translation of the induction into the attendees language.

In the event that an interpreter is not available the attendee's induction will be postponed until one can be located. The practical situation is that overseas workers tend to work in groups, and therefore interpreters will normally be available from other members of the group.

2. Buddy System

Wherever possible non English speakers will be "buddied up" at the workplace with an English speaking compatriot. This person will be used to pass on information and ensure that their buddy understands task briefing and other instructions. The ratio of English speaking to non English speaking operatives will not normally go above 1:2.

3. Supervision/Training

Supervision ratios levels in groups where there is a significant number of non English speakers will be increased to ensure that instructions are being understood and adhered to. Time devoted to training will be increased and the non English speakers understanding of instructions and briefings will be closely monitored.

4. Toolbox Talks/Method Statements/Risk Assessments

When delivering toolbox talks, explaining method statements and risk assessments, an interpreter should be utilised as in the induction. The use of visual aids in presenting information can overcome the language barrier and will be utilised when required.

5. Information Translated into Other Languages

The HSE has an extensive library of health and safety information leaflets that have been translated into the languages of the most common nationality groupings.

6. Signage

Where information needs to be communicated to on site, written notices will be replaced with clear symbols and diagrams that obviate the need for English language skills, wherever possible.