

CONTENTS OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY FILE

The Guidance to CDM 2015 L153 outlines at Appendix 4 the information that is likely to be included within a health and safety file.

While the format of the file will vary greatly between different types of project (eg the file for a processing plant is likely to be far more extensive than that for an office building), the sections set out below indicate the basic elements that need to be included in any file.

Section 1 — Drawings

A brief description of the work carried out.

Section 2 — Residual Hazards

Information on any residual hazards which have not been eliminated through the design and construction processes and how they have been dealt with. For example, surveys or other information concerning asbestos, contaminated land, water bearing strata, buried services, any working at height that may be required, etc.

Section 3 — Key Structural Principles

The health and safety file should contain details of the design concepts behind various elements of the structure. For example, bracing, sources of substantial stored energy — including pre- or post-tensioned members — and safe working loads for floors and roofs, particularly where these may preclude placing scaffolding or heavy machinery there.

A useful checklist might include:

- structural frame/load-bearing walls
- cladding/infill
- curtain walling and window systems
- floor structures
- roof structure/covering
- mechanical services' design concept, eg whether natural ventilation or air conditioning is used
- electrical services' design concept, eg whether all electric lighting is on one circuit or on a floor-by-floor basis.

The file should identify any specific sequence that was used in the erection of the building and which might need to be considered during alterations or demolition. This is particularly relevant to prefabricated buildings or structural elements (eg portal frames) that are inherently unstable in isolation during erection and have specific temporary propping requirements.

Detailing the sequence in which external cladding panels were assembled could also be included in the file, which would indicate how they might be safely disassembled.

Section 4 — Hazardous Materials Used

Potentially hazardous materials that may be identified on the drawings or as a separate piece of documentation include:

- flammable finishes
- various types of insulating materials
- lead paint
- pesticides
- special coatings which should not be burnt off.

Section 5 — Information Regarding Installed Plant

Any special arrangements for lifting, order or other special instructions for dismantling installed plant and equipment. This should also include maintenance requirements and if lock off procedures will be required.

Section 6 — Health and Safety Information Required for Cleaning and Maintaining the Structure

The file must set out the various elements within the building that are provided for maintenance and cleaning purposes and which have health and safety implications for those using them, including:

- facilities for roof access
- gantries
- window-cleaning cradles
- remote window opening gear
- permanent fixings for fastening ladders.

The file must outline the health and safety issues with regard to the overall structure and its finishes. This might include procedures for:

- decorating the outside of the structure
- clearing gutters
- renewing air-conditioning unit filters.

These procedures should include details about the required frequency of cleaning and the types of cleaning materials to be used and those to be avoided.

Section 7 — Significant Services

Included in the file should be information on the nature, location and markings of significant services, including underground cables, gas supply equipment, fire-fighting services, etc.

A useful checklist includes:

- mains distribution, eg the location, size and termination of the gas main, water main and telecommunications
- emergency backup facilities, eg standby generators
- security alarms
- fire-fighting systems, eg sprinkler systems, drencher systems and fire shutters.

Section 8 — Information and As-built Drawings

Information and as-built drawings should be included of the structure, its plant and equipment (for example, the means of safe access to and from service voids, fire doors and compartmentalisation, etc).

The drawings should be the final, “as-built” version (ie as amended from the originals through the construction process). These will represent the final structure as it actually exists and not just as it was conceived. The drawings should:

- indicate the position of incoming services and distribution (any or all of which may be concealed)
- indicate the location and details of various building materials used
- identify the various types of insulation material, flammable finishes, etc that may represent hazards if they are disturbed
- make cross references to the information on hazards where appropriate.

The Health and Safety File should NOT contain information which will not be of help when planning construction work in the future such as the following:

- the pre-construction information, or construction phase plan
- construction phase risk assessments, written systems of work and COSHH assessments
- construction phase accident statistics
- details of the contractors and designers involved in the project (though it may be useful to include details of the principal contractor and principal designer)
- contractual documents
- information about structures, or parts of structures, that have been demolished, unless there are any implications for remaining or future structures, for example voids
- information contained in other documents (but relevant cross-references can be included).

Managing the Preparation of the Health And Safety File

Under CDM 2015, the [principal designer](#) is responsible for ensuring that the health and safety file contains all of the necessary information when it is handed to the client upon completion of the project.

Preparation of the file should begin at the same time as the pre-construction information is being prepared and continue through the duration of the project.

The file involves compiling information from a variety of sources, including:

- the [client](#), who can provide existing information, eg drawings and location of services, as well as information on how he/she would like the final maintenance procedures to be arranged
- the designers, eg architects, structural engineers and quantity surveyors
- the [principal contractor](#) and subcontractors
- statutory/private undertakers for utilities, eg gas, electricity, water and telecommunications.

Certain information may be readily available, including:

- designers' drawings
- operation and maintenance manuals from specialist equipment suppliers.

The principal designer may need to be proactive in order to obtain relevant information by petitioning the various parties to supply the necessary details to complete the contents outlined above.

Compilation information for the health and safety file and health and safety plan should occur simultaneously. As with the health and safety plan, the two stages in the development of the file are the:

- pre-construction preparation of the file
- construction phase development of the file.

Pre-construction Preparation of the File

The starting point of the health and safety file is the pre-construction information. Two sources of information for the file are the drawings and the layouts.

Designers are obliged under CDM 2015 to undertake risk evaluations for the health and safety implications of their designs in order to design out risks or identify any residual risks that could not be eliminated at design stage. These will highlight any remaining hazards for inclusion within the pre-construction information.

It would be helpful for designers to distinguish the risk evaluations that have implications for future maintenance and demolition so that they may be readily accessed by the principal designer for the purposes of compiling the health and safety file. This may even be conducted as a separate exercise by designers.

With regard to designers, the management responsibilities of the [principal designer](#) may vary greatly between projects, as follows.

- If the design is being carried out by a team within a particular organisation, designers may liaise directly with one another.
- The work of the principal designer in compiling the health and safety file may be more onerous on projects where the work of several individual designers not directly in contact with each other needs to be co-ordinated.

In either case, the principal designer will need to:

- review the interaction of various elements of the design for their health and safety implications
- extract those elements which will affect future construction work for inclusion in the health and safety file.

Updating the File During Construction

The [principal designer](#) will need to liaise with the [principal contractor](#) and subcontractors during the construction phase of a project in order to assess any design variations or new design elements for possible inclusion in the health and safety file.

The compilation of the health and safety file should be properly managed in order to prevent it from containing information which is not relevant or helpful. Such management requires:

- organising regular meetings between the principal designer and the principal contractor and designers to review design variations
- checking that all variations to the work content are recorded, even when there is no financial effect
- verifying that all variations are assessed in health and safety terms, risk assessments are carried out and that risks to health and safety for future construction work are recorded in the file.

Function of the Health and Safety File After Construction is Complete

CDM 2015 requires the [client](#) to keep the health and safety file once it has been delivered by the principal designer at the conclusion of a project. The client must make the file available to:

- the [principal designer](#), designers and contractors on subsequent projects
- anyone else who has need of it.

There is no legal requirement under the CDM regulations for the file to be updated other than when new construction work is initiated. In this case, the file provides basic data for a:

- new health and safety plan
- new health and safety file, which reflects issues raised during the new project.

The process of passing on the information contained within the file should take place whenever the information in the file is important for the health and safety of those involved in construction work even for minor works of short duration.

When any work has been completed, the file should record any new circumstances that arise. The file will essentially remain unchanged provided the same methods and materials as adopted previously are used again. However, changes that affect the ways in which safe systems of work are set up must be recorded.

Storing the File

The information for the health and safety file can be recorded in a variety of ways, including:

- in paper format, with all of the necessary information bound into a single or series of folders, properly cross-indexed
- electronically, ensuring that all information will be retrievable in future.

The safe keeping of the file should be treated with as much care as other important legal documents. In multi-occupancy situations, eg where a housing association owns a block of flats, the owner should keep and maintain the file but ensure that individual flat occupiers are supplied with health and safety information concerning their home.