

Understanding the challenges

Understanding the existing status of a site and structure is key to reducing risk for the whole team. Preconstruction information is a fundamental requirement to help decision making. This guide tells you where your responsibilities lie.

The preconstruction information is the developing body of information needed by designers and contractors to advise clients on the approach that is in the client's best interest. It reduces unknowns which can bring real problems to all aspects of project delivery.

It is the duty of the client, as defined in the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM 2015), to provide the preconstruction information. But other duty holders under CDM 2015, especially including the principal designer and designers, are required to contribute to it and will need to justify why they need the information they are requesting.

CDM 2015: designers' duties

Part 2 of CDM 2015 relates to client duties. Be aware that other client duties exist, especially in Regulation 8, which is general duties applying to all duty holders.

Under part 2 of CDM2015 the client is required to make and maintain suitable arrangements for managing the health and safety aspects of a project. Included in this requirement is the duty to allocate sufficient time and other resources to allow construction work to be carried out, so far as is reasonably practicable, without harming anyone affected by the project. Specifically, preconstruction information is required. This body of information is defined in Regulation 2 and guidance on it is given in Appendix 2.

It is important to recognise that the preconstruction information is not just site survey information but also includes the management arrangements for the project.

Life outside the tick box.



The information needs to be at an appropriate level of detail and proportionate to the risks involved and must include any information in the client's possession or which is reasonably obtained by or on behalf of the client, which is relevant to the construction work. It must include:

- a) Information about
 - i. the project;
 - ii. planning and management of the project;
 - iii. health and safety hazards and how they will be addressed; and
- b) information in any existing health and safety file.

The purpose of the pre-construction information is to provide sufficient information to allow duty holders to avoid, reduce or manage hazards and risks. It is highly likely that designers will need to request specific information to help them to achieve this on behalf of their clients as design and decision making moves from concept through scheme and onto detailed design. For instance, the information that designers need once a decision has been taken to use off site construction methods is likely to be substantially different from that needed if traditional building methods are to be used.

What to include in the preconstruction information

The structure of the preconstruction information is not prescribed by law. Its content needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the risks of a project and a variety of other project-specific factors.

Consider the following operations, by way of illustration:

- **The demolition of a structure on a brownfield site undergoing substantial redevelopment**
- **The same demolition, but adjacent to a hospital that carries out laser eye surgery**

While both demolitions pose serious risks, each also presents its own, site-specific problems. All of these risks need to be managed effectively, and the implications for project design and decision making agreed at an early stage.

If there is an existing health and safety file for the structure, which should be the case for any structure built or modified since 1994, this document should provide both a useful source of information and a helpful structure. In the early days of CDM, however, many health and safety files were cumbersome, repetitive and provided little value to those working on structures at a later date. You may find that it is better to start afresh with a new structure for the documentation and modern methods of information sharing.

If the project uses BIM (Building Information Management) then the scope and timing or information sharing will be agreed at the beginning of the project within the BIM framework and the preconstruction information will be an important base for the development to detail of project design and construction.

However the preconstruction information is structured and developed, it is essential that all of its information be easily and clearly accessible to those who will need to respond to it. In other words, the whole project team should find it an indispensable and useful core document.

The preconstruction information should be considered a live document, to be reviewed and updated as the project progresses and information is required.



What designers need to do

It is likely that the client will need help in deciding what information is needed by the project team to help them to minimise hazard and risks on the project and for the building or other assets. Designers may need to prepare briefings for clients to assist with this.

Designers who are seeking appointment for work on a project should have sufficient information made available to them at a time which allows them to put together a bid based on a clear understanding of the nature of the work involved. Where insufficient information is provided designers should explain this to clients and point out that the unknown aspects of the project introduce commercial and safety risks that none of the bidding design teams can quantify and which are likely to cost the client more as a result.

Designers already appointed should be provided with sufficient information at a stage early enough to enable them to judge whether it is reasonably practicable to eliminate any foreseeable health and safety risks during the design process and, where it is not, the steps they should take to reduce or control the remaining risks. From this requirement it is easy to see that CDM 2015 binds the duty holders into a team where if one fails then others in the team also fail. Here, if the designer has insufficient information early enough it will not be possible to design out hazards and risks or minimise and manage them effectively. Both the client and the designer will have failed to reach the standards expected of them.

Useful in understanding why early information can improve all aspects of project delivery is the MacLeamy curve which demonstrates clearly the obvious benefits of early planning and decision making. Designers should consider developing some briefing notes for their clients in relation to preconstruction information and can use a variant of this curve to illustrate the point to clients. If clients do not understand their own duties and how they can contribute to the project success, they are less likely to be able to deliver effective preconstruction information to designers.

Designers don't need to produce the preconstruction information. Or do they?

Although the preconstruction information is the responsibility of the client, on domestic projects the client's duties pass automatically to the contractor or if appointed in writing, to the designer or principal designer. In this case the statutory duty for management arrangements, including production of the necessary preconstruction information will be the responsibility of the duty holder who has automatically or through appointment taken on the client duties.

Useful resources

HSE L153 CDM 2015 and Guidance Appendix 2

See elsewhere on SID:

ADM004 What designers should know

Life outside the tick box.