

The Delivery Hub health, safety and environment
Raising the bar 29
Supervision

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Objective

This Raising the Bar guidance document aims to provide clear guidance on the expected level and minimum competency requirements of all tiers of supply chain supervision on all Highways England Construction and Maintenance Activities.

Introduction

A number of research papers conducted on behalf of the HSE have found evidence that suggests poor supervision is a significant organisational factor that can contribute to accidents. Problems can emerge because of poorly defined responsibilities, inadequate resources, poor supervisory conduct and behaviour, heavy workloads or as a result of removing supervisory roles altogether.

For the purpose of this guidance a supervisor is someone defined as “Those persons directly supervising construction related work activities on Highways England sites. They are the front line supervisors with direct responsibility for putting people to work and who will typically brief their workers on how to carry out their work and ensure that they are carrying out their work safely through on site monitoring”

Background

Recent investigations into incidents within construction and maintenance activities of Highways England have highlighted a deficiency in the current expected ratios and competency levels of supervisors within our supply chain. Further investigations have identified an inconsistent approach between different suppliers in both minimum levels of supervision and minimum standards of competency.

As a result this has been highlighted in Highways England's 5 Year Health and Safety Plan as a particular concern as it reduces the opportunities to recognise

and respond to unsafe practices. Inadequate supervision in the workplace is a management system failure. Therefore, effective levels of supervision must be a key part of an organisation's safety management system.

Organisational Expectation

All organisations working for or on behalf of Highways England should ensure the right supervisors have been selected for the right job and ensure the relevant individuals have:

- The necessary skills for supervisory activities;
- A thorough understanding of hazards and control measures for the task;
- The experience and demonstrated ability to lead teams;
- An understanding of behavioural issues, leadership and effective intervention skills;
- The necessary attitude to ensure the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of their team remains their highest priority;

The requirement to provide adequate resources is a key management function. By providing an adequate and appropriate level of supervision for workers an organisation must ensure:

- They support supervisors in discharging their roles and responsibilities
- Give them achievable targets
- Support them in conflict resolution
- Ensure supervisors have the time and the opportunity to interact with others to fulfil all of their supervisory responsibilities
- Provide additional training to supervisors where necessary in the specific hazards of your processes and how you expect the risks to be controlled
- Measure, audit and review all aspects of the work activities to determine the effectiveness of supervision

Role of Supervision

A supervisor has a particularly important part to play as a front-line decision maker and as part of the management team. The right supervisors who demonstrate the correct behaviours can have a significant, positive impact on the workforce.

Supervision and supervisory roles typically involve:

- Defining overall team workload
- Planning and allocating day-to-day work and appropriate level of manpower
- Briefing, coaching and encouragement of individual workers
- Controlling/monitoring work patterns/shift rotas and fatigue
- Using effective two way communication
- Problem solving/decision making
- Monitor the effectiveness of training
- Ensure the workforce have the necessary capacity and competence to do the job
- Measuring team performance
- Promoting and influencing positive culture
- First response to incident management
- Initiating and leading minor incident investigations
- Maintaining and suggesting improvements to procedures for continual improvement
- Monitoring safety performance and compliance ensuring a just culture approach in a friendly but firm manner
- Challenging unsafe practices and poor behaviour, stopping work activity where necessary
- Providing leadership in normal and abnormal situations such as emergency situations
- Ensures and promotes workforce involvement
- Reviewing how well tasks have been completed and implementing lessons learnt
- Provide coordination between contractors

Overall Highways England expects all persons with supervisory responsibilities to lead by example and set the standards for workers to follow, to raise awareness and improve the Health and Safety Culture on site.

Supervisor Competence

The level of knowledge and experience of a supervisor is of equal importance to the competency level of the team undertaking the work activity. Effective supervisors are those who have the skills, knowledge, training, experience and leadership qualities to suit the job in hand. Good communication and people management skills are also important qualities for supervisors. Highways England acknowledges that the degree of knowledge, skill and experience will vary in regard to non-working supervision for different types of roles and activities. To aid consistency and promote continuous development across our supply chain, Highways England have developed a suit of Role Specific Supervisor Profiles as part of the Passport Competency Management System. These profiles will also span across three levels which are, Trainee Supervisor, Supervisor and Senior Supervisor. The reason for this is Highways England also acknowledge that the level of hazard and risk of any activity should be reflected in the overall competence and experience of the supervisor. Therefore activities that pose a higher risk must only be supervised by experienced Senior Supervisors.

Whilst each profile will be tailored to the needs of each role undertaken on Highways England's Road Network, there are many generic constants that will be included which are

- A role based qualification such as NVQ/NHSS/ILM etc
- Hold other necessary technical qualifications as identified by industry standards
- Have sufficient knowledge of health and safety gained at a construction specific course of at least two days duration or agreed equivalent
- Hold a supervisor level CSCS card
- Attended a minimum Level 2 Qualification Risk Assessment course which includes a practical element
- Have the sufficient experience, on the job knowledge and skill in the activity being supervised

Those with supervisory responsibilities should be assessed by the line manager to ensure they meet the competence requirements set out in the Highways England suite of Supervisory Role Profiles. Once assessed, each contract / project must formally appoint the supervisor to that position in writing. The appoint letter should define their roles and responsibilities which must be communicated, understood and accepted by the supervisor.

Supervisory staff must be inducted and competent in the application of expected standards and management procedures on the contract / project and must also be easily identifiable to all on site. In most cases this is by the use of a different coloured safety helmet but could also be by the use of a photographic skills board.

Management Structure

A hierarchical style of company leadership is encouraged within an organisation management structure. A typical hierarchy style within Highways England's supply chain is as follows;

Works Manager / Depot Manager / Contracts Manager

- Predominantly the first managerial position

Supervisor

- A non-working supervisor responsible for putting people under their control to work and monitoring performance

Lead Operative

- Sometimes known as a Chargehand or Ganger these are the working supervisor in charge of a small gang of workers

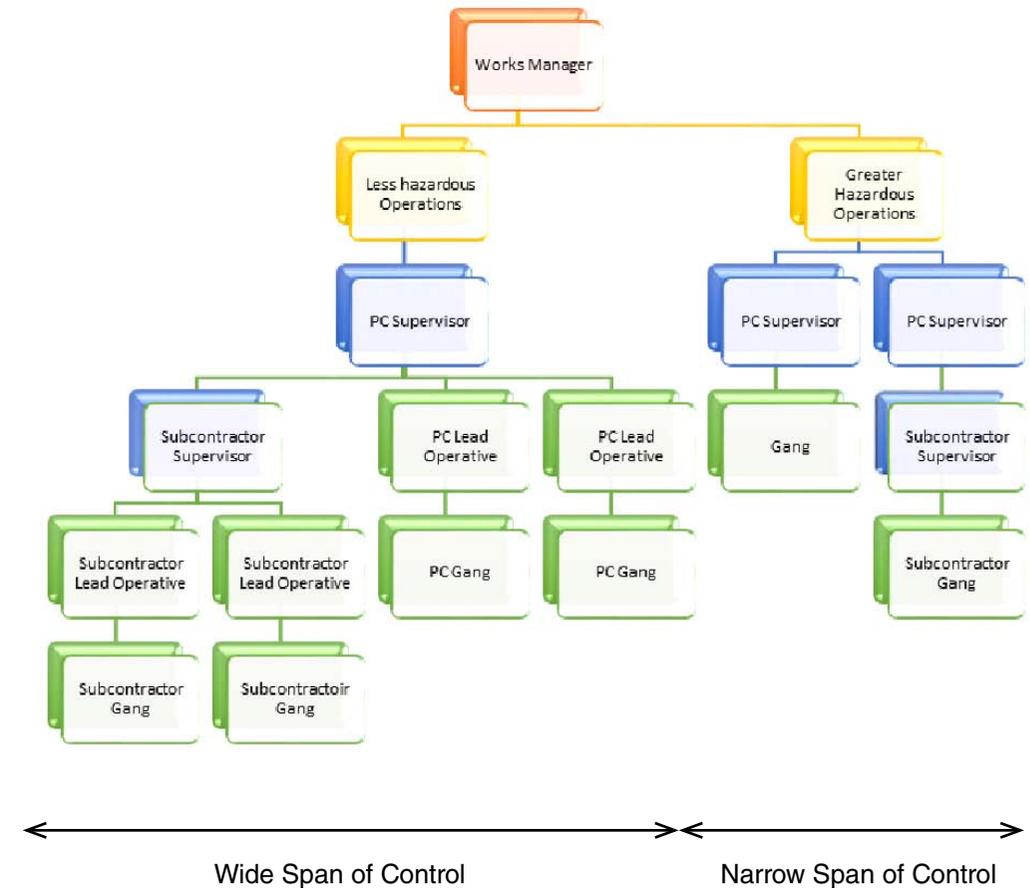
Skilled Operative

- Someone with sufficient experience, knowledge or skill to coach new, inexperienced general operatives.

Whilst the majority of supervisor responsibility falls to the front line supervisors it is worth remembering that supervisory functions may be shared between numbers of front-line managers, or between lead individuals in a self-managed team in a hierarchy structure known as the span of control. Depending on the activity being undertaken effective supervision should be reflected in the use of both non-working and working supervision. However lead operatives in self-managed teams should only typically be used for low-medium activities. By their very nature activities that

are more hazardous require a greater level of supervision than less hazardous activities and the level of onsite monitoring of non-working supervision should be increased accordingly making the span of control narrow as appose to wide.

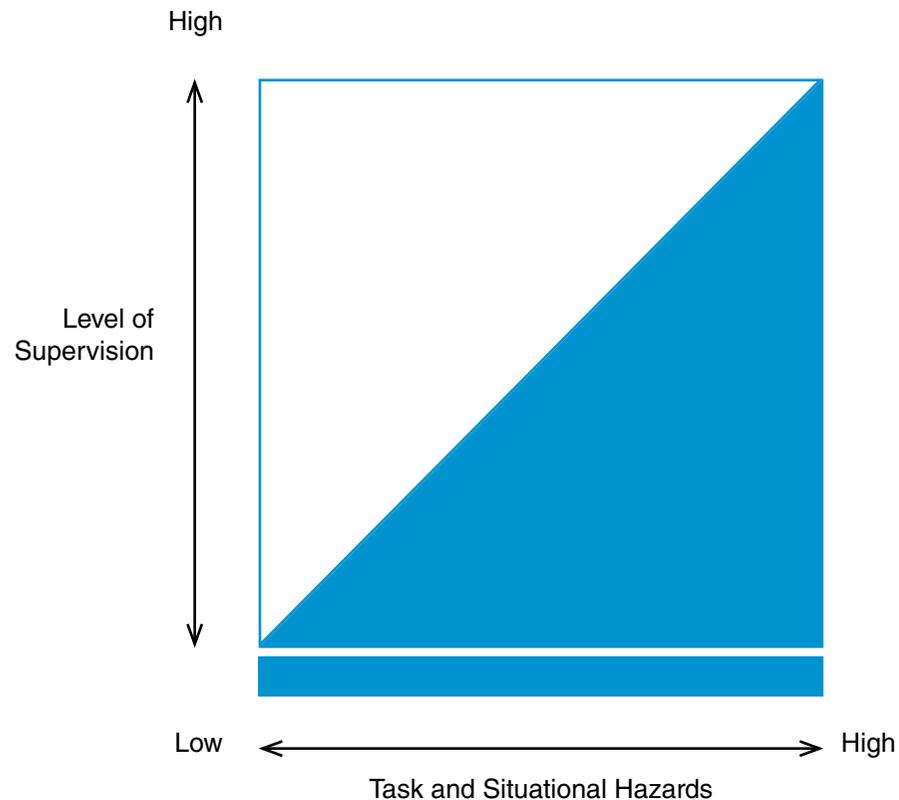
An example of this is represented by the diagram below



Level of Supervision

CDM 2015 requires all contractors who employ workers or manages workers under their control (i.e. agency and subcontractor workers) to ensure that appropriate supervision is provided. Supervision is an essential part of monitoring safe working and conditions. The level of supervision provided should reflect the level of risk of the operation to be carried out, the environment in which the task is being undertaken and the skills, knowledge, training and experience of the workers concerned.

The chart below shows the more hazardous the task and situations then the higher the level of supervision required.



In deciding the appropriate levels of Management and Supervision the following may need to be considered

- Types of Hazards and the associated level of risk
- Number of work activities
- Location and environment of work activities including distances and remoteness
- Number of people, plant, equipment and materials involved in each activity
- Duration of works, Time pressures, shift patterns

To ensure that the necessary precautions are taken; safety checks at each stage of the work activity may need to be taken and the supervisor should remain present whilst particular work activities are being undertaken. Even where risks are low, some supervision will always be needed to make sure that standards are being maintained.

New, inexperienced or young people, as well as those whose first language is not English, are also very likely to need more supervision than others. Workers will need to know how to raise concerns so supervisors are familiar with the possible problems due to unfamiliarity, inexperience and communication difficulties

The start of any new task or the introduction of a new set of workers will initially need a greater degree of supervision. Once the Supervisor is confident that the work is being undertaken as planned and workers fully understand the risks the level of close supervision may be reduced through reassessment of the activity.

To aid suppliers to consistently assess the level of Supervision required on Highways England sites an indicative Supervisory Ratio Decision Tool is provided in Appendix A.

Use of Subcontractors

Principal Contractor Supervisors have an important part to play in managing and checking the work of contractors to ensure it is being done as agreed and to the required specification and standard. The Principal Contractor Supervisor should also be visible to provide coordination between other contractors as well as being the main focal point in the communication and issuing of project specific documents such as permits-to-work. The Principal Contractor Supervisor is there to also reinforce their commitment to health and safety so that 'stakeholders' are in no doubt about how important health and safety is to the organisation.

Where Principal Contractor engages in the services of 2nd and 3rd tier suppliers to Highways England then the Principal Contractor is required to adopt, promote and enforce the standard expected by themselves and Highways England. Regardless of whether the subcontractor provides their own supervisor to the required competency standard, Highways England expect that the Principal Contractor provides their own additional supervision for contractors and other third parties on site and make these arrangements clear to everyone so they understand their roles and responsibilities.

Whilst Highways England expects the Principal Contractor to always have supervision present, the span of control can be widened once a clear trust and assurance is developed by long standing collaborative relationships. This confidence will initially be taken from undertaking the supervisor assessment requirement as set out in [Raising the Bar 5 - Behavioural Based Safety](#).

Audit and Monitoring

Highways England will monitor compliance against the minimum expectations of this Raising the Bar guidance document through the Project Management and Independent Health and Safety Inspection processes. In the future a formal audit of training requirements will be undertaken through the Highways England Passport competency management system on a 6 monthly basis.

Appendices

Appendix A: Supervisor Ratio Decision Tool

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