RAMS Checklist for Subcontractors

What a principal contractor expects to see

Principal contractors use your risk assessments and method statements to plan and coordinate work on their site. HSE guidance is clear that obtaining them helps that planning. A document that could apply to any job, with your logo added at the top, is the one most likely to come back. Work through this list before you send yours in.

WHAT THE LAW AND HSE GUIDANCE ACTUALLY SAY

- Under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, a contractor must plan, manage and monitor their work, taking account of risks to anyone who might be affected, including the public. On a project with more than one contractor, you must follow the principal contractor's directions and the parts of the construction phase plan that apply to you. (CDM 2015, regulation 15)
- Employers must assess health and safety risks. The significant findings must be recorded where five or more people are employed. Separate assessments are required for certain hazards, including work at height, hazardous substances (COSHH), manual handling, noise, vibration and lead. (HSE, Administration)
- A written method statement is required before demolition, dismantling or structural alteration. For other construction work, method statements are not generally a legal requirement, but they are a proven way to plan the job and are what most principal contractors will ask you for. (HSE, Administration)

1. DOCUMENT CONTROL

- [ ] Your company name and a business email address
- [ ] A clear title, unique document reference, revision number and date
- [ ] Who prepared it, and who reviewed or approved it
- [ ] The project name, the site address, and the exact location of your work
- [ ] The client and the principal contractor, named

2. A CLEAR SCOPE

- [ ] What you will do, and what you will not do
- [ ] How long you expect to be on site, and roughly how many people
- [ ] How your work meets other trades or live operations, such as a working yard or HGV route

3. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE

- [ ] The person who will supervise the work on site
- [ ] Named competent persons where they apply (plant, excavations, temporary works, confined spaces)
- [ ] Your first aider and emergency contacts

4. A STEP-BY-STEP METHOD

- [ ] A logical sequence from arrival and set-up, through the work, to clean-up and leaving site
- [ ] Hold points, for example "do not excavate until the permit to dig is signed"
- [ ] Written so a supervisor who was not at the planning meeting could follow it
- [ ] Diagrams where they make the method clearer. HSE notes that the most effective method statements often include them.

5. A RISK ASSESSMENT THAT MATCHES THE METHOD

- [ ] The actual hazards of this job and this site, not a generic list
- [ ] Who might be harmed, including other contractors and the public
- [ ] Risk ratings before and after controls
- [ ] Controls that are specific, and that follow the hierarchy: eliminate, substitute, engineer, then safe systems of work, with PPE last
- [ ] Any required specific assessments attached or clearly referenced (work at height, COSHH, manual handling, noise, vibration)

6. PLANT, EQUIPMENT AND COMPETENCE

- [ ] Plant and equipment you will bring, and any you expect the principal contractor to provide
- [ ] Inspection, maintenance and thorough examination where required, for example lifting equipment
- [ ] Evidence that operators are trained and authorised (the cards and tickets that apply to the plant)

7. GROUND, SERVICES AND TEMPORARY WORKS

- [ ] Underground services: how you will obtain drawings, scan the ground (CAT and genny) and use a permit to dig
- [ ] Excavation support or battering, safe access, and inspection of excavations
- [ ] Overhead lines, unusual ground, contamination or existing structures, if they apply
- [ ] Temporary works design, or a clear statement that none is required

8. COORDINATION AND SITE RULES

- [ ] How you will fit around other contractors and any live operations
- [ ] Site rules, induction, access, parking, deliveries and storage
- [ ] Welfare: you must not start unless suitable welfare is provided for your workers, either yours or the site's. (CDM 2015, regulation 15)
- [ ] Reasonable steps to keep unauthorised people out of your work area

9. EMERGENCIES, ENVIRONMENT AND LEAVING SITE

- [ ] First aid, fire, spill and rescue arrangements that fit the task, for example excavation collapse or confined space
- [ ] How you will manage dust, noise, silt, fuel, wash-out and waste
- [ ] What you will do if you find asbestos or unexpected contamination

10. BRIEFING AND SIGN-OFF

- [ ] A briefing record for every operative to sign before they start
- [ ] A statement that the RAMS will be reviewed if the method, site conditions, plant or people change
- [ ] You have read it against the actual job, not just put your name on it

CIVILS CHECKS — TICK THOSE THAT APPLY

- [ ] Live traffic or HGV movements: segregation, a banksman, exclusion zones and delivery windows
- [ ] Drainage and chambers: confined space assessment, gas monitoring and a rescue plan where they apply
- [ ] Concrete and cement: COSHH assessment, skin and eye protection, and a wash-out arrangement
- [ ] Work on a trading site: permits, protection of existing drains and interceptors, and how you will keep the operation running

COMMON REASONS DOCUMENTS COME BACK

- [ ] The wrong site name, or an old revision still in circulation
- [ ] Generic hazards that do not match the method
- [ ] No mention of underground services on an excavation job
- [ ] Plant listed, but no competence or inspection arrangements
- [ ] No briefing sign-off sheet
- [ ] A method that skips set-up, permits, or how you leave the site

ONCE IT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED

- [ ] Brief the gang and work to the document
- [ ] Stop and revise it if conditions change. HSE is clear that a method statement should be revised when circumstances change markedly.
- [ ] Keep the signed briefing sheet with your site records

SOURCES

- The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, regulations 12 and 15 — https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/51
- HSE, Contractors: roles and responsibilities — https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/CDM/2015/contractors.htm
- HSE, Planning for construction work — https://www.hse.gov.uk/Construction/safetytopics/planning.htm
- HSE, Administration (risk assessments and method statements) — https://www.hse.gov.uk/Construction/safetytopics/admin.htm

Need a site-specific RAMS written for the actual job? RAMS Desk is run by Richard Fisher, a practising civils MD. Send the job details to info@fisherccl.co.uk. Standard turnaround is two working days.

This checklist is a practical aid written against CDM 2015 and HSE's published guidance. It is not legal advice, not a complete RAMS, and not a substitute for a competent review of the actual job. You remain responsible for making sure your documents are suitable and sufficient for your work, for briefing your team, and for updating them if conditions change. RAMS Desk by Richard Fisher currently trades under Fisher CC Ltd. Brand name is a working placeholder and can be changed later.