



**BECTU**

a sector of Prospect

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**ART**

# BECTU WORKS FOR YOU

**BECTU promotes the interests of those working in the creative sectors. How do we do this? By supporting the workforce and by using that influence to persuade employers to treat their staff fairly, be they employed or freelance.**

Improvements to pay and conditions of employment (working hours, sick pay, holiday entitlement, and job security, to name but a few) and the proper protection of the workforce through a commitment to health and safety, equality and training define what BECTU is about.

## THIS ADVICE CARD

- Outlines some of the main health and safety issues facing you at work;
- Lists some important hazards and risks facing you as an art technician;
- Explains what your employer should be doing to protect you;
- Advises you how to protect yourself;
- Legal references correct at July 2018.



# HEALTH AND SAFETY LAW

**By law, primary responsibility for installation health and safety rests with the employer, the gallery manager or art gallery.**

They must:

- Comply with the law;
- Ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees and others affected by work;
- Provide a safe workplace, safe plant and equipment, safe access and egress, safe working conditions and systems of work;
- Make effective arrangements for health and safety and welfare, including emergency procedures;
- Appoint one or more “competent” persons to advise on these arrangements;
- Use competent staff and contractors;
- Carry out risk assessments, avoid/minimise risks, and introduce suitable preventive measures;
- Consult, co-operate and communicate with others;
- Provide health and safety information, instruction, training and supervision.

Owners of premises on which work is done also have legal responsibilities towards occupiers and others regarding the safety of their premises or sites. Co-operation is essential.

Most workers in the art world – including freelancers – are “employees” for health and safety purposes. This is not decided by your tax status, but by factors such as the amount of control you have over your work.

## DOs

- **DO** ask who is the named person responsible for production health and safety;
- **DO** ask for risk assessments;
- **DO** monitor and review health and safety when you are controlling activities and/or equipment

## DON'Ts

- **DON'T** accept health and safety responsibilities beyond your competence
- **DON'T** sign documents that imply you accept such responsibilities
- **Relevant law:** Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Low-cost liability insurance is one union benefit which ranks highly with members. BECTU's group policy, which members can choose to be covered by, runs from 1 May – 30 April each year and has an upper cover limit of £10 million per claim.

**[www.bectu.org.uk/pli](http://www.bectu.org.uk/pli)** Members are also entitled to BECTU's support programme for freelancers which includes a range of legal services both work related and non-work related, individual representation on employment matters, including chasing monies owed and expert advice on personal injury and access to a tax consultant.

# WORKING TIME AND STRESS

**Long working hours can cause cumulative fatigue and stress. If you are overtired or exhausted, you are more prone to errors, accidents, musculo-skeletal injuries, infections and long-term ill health.**

Other sources of stress include lack of control over work, unreasonable schedules, poor working relationships, conflicting/excessive workload, lack of sleep, rest or nutrition and work-life imbalance.

BECTU believes that no-one should work more than 12 hours a day.

By law you are entitled to rest breaks, daily breaks (at least 11 hours), weekly breaks (of a least 35 hours, or a fortnightly break of at least 59 hours), a maximum average working week of 48 hours (if you agree to do more it must not involve health risks).

Planning should avoid unnecessary retakes especially those involving wet work, smoke effects, or stressful or tiring activities.

Where there's no accessible public transport, alternative transport should be provided from the workplace.

Everyone is entitled to a work place without harassment, bullying or other abuse.

Risk assessments should include measures to reduce work-related stress and promote good working relationships.

**Relevant law:** *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended).*

# MANUAL HANDLING

**Work involving lifting, pushing, pulling or moving a load may cause harm by damaging muscles, tendons and other soft tissues. Risks increase with fatigue or cold, awkward or heavy loads, repeated handling, pregnancy or previous back problems.**

Employers should assess and plan lifting operations. They must:

- Avoid hazardous handling wherever practicable (eg, redesigning tasks or loads or using mechanical aids);
- Assess unavoidable risks, taking account of individual capability;
- Reduce risks – eg, using appropriate lifting equipment; avoiding trip hazards or obstacles; ensuring that pregnant women and people with past back injuries don't move hazardous loads; working in teams, or, breaking up large loads into smaller manageable loads;
- Avoiding slippery floors or obstacles;
- Provide training in safe manual handling techniques, such as good lifting.
- Loads should be marked with their weight and other details such as the heaviest side if they are not symmetrical.

**Relevant law:** *Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992*



# WORKING AT HEIGHT

**Falls from height are the single most common cause of death at work. Any situation with a risk of falling two metres (about six feet) or more is particularly hazardous.**

If you could fall more than two metres there must be:

- A safe working platform, and a guard rail at waist height; and
- An exclusion zone immediately below the platform.

Where any of these is not possible, a personal safety line with belt or harness is required.

When using ladders, try to insist on the right one for the job. Don't use stepladders where conventional ladders are safer. Don't use aluminium ladders near electrical equipment or supply. Ladders should be secured at the bottom by lashing to the stiles, and at the top. They should be regularly inspected, repaired and maintained, and records kept.

People working at height must not carry loose items in pockets. Where necessary, wear hard hats and safety shoes.

**Relevant law:** *Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992; Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 2002; Work at Height Regulations (2005)*



# HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

**Hazardous substances include dust, fumes and biological hazards.**

**Your work as an art technician may expose you to:**

- Lead in paints – lead poisoning is a prescribed industrial disease;
- Solvents in paints, strippers, thinners or lacquers, which may harm your nervous or reproductive system;
- Isocyanates in polyurethane paints, which may damage your lungs and lead to asthma. Two-pack polyurethane paints, which need to be mixed and cured, pose the greatest risk of exposure.
- Hazardous substances can get into your body by being breathed in, swallowed, or by direct contact with your eyes or skin. Employers must not expose you to dangerous substances unless they first assess the risk and implement control measures.

**This means, in order of priority:**

- 1. Avoiding the risk altogether by substituting a safe(r) alternative;**
- 2. Physically isolating or enclosing the hazardous substance;**
- 3. Controlling exposure levels, by ventilation or by reducing exposure times;**
- 4. Providing personal protective equipment – eg, gloves, overalls, breathing apparatus is also helpful, but should not be seen as an alternative to other measures.**

Where necessary, exposure levels should be monitored, and health surveillance measures should be introduced.

**Relevant law:** *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health 2002; Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002*

# NOISE

**Exposure to high noise levels – eg, from machines – can lead to long-term hearing loss. Employers must assess risks where high noise levels are likely, reduce levels as far as practicable, and prevent hearing damage.**

At noise levels at or above 85 dB (A) averaged over eight hours, employers must provide employees with ear protection on request.

At noise levels at or above 90 dB (A) over eight hours or very loud noises (eg, explosions) over 140dB, employers must provide employees with ear protection and they must wear it.

*Relevant law: Noise at Work Regulations 1989 (under review).*

# WORK EQUIPMENT

People are responsible for work equipment to the extent of their control. If your employer or anyone else supplies tools or other equipment they are responsible for supplying them in a safe condition and for providing the last inspection report. If supplying your own tools, it's your responsibility.

All work equipment must be designed and constructed safely, properly guarded, suitable for the task and the operator concerned, safely installed/sited and safely operated. It must be:

- Maintained in good repair;
- Inspected after installation if incorrect installation could cause harm;
- Regularly/routinely inspected if there is a significant risk from deterioration or exceptional circumstances.

There must be proper systems in place for inspection, maintenance and repair, with records kept and supplied where necessary to users and others. “Work equipment” includes tools, machinery and other equipment (powered and no-powered) and equipment hired in from another company. Equipment moved from one place to another must be accompanied by an inspect report. Inspections must be carried out after installation and before use, and then at least annually for lifting equipment and at least every six months for equipment used to lift people. Written inception reports must be kept.

Special additional rules apply to mobile and/or self-controlled remote work equipment, power presses, lifting equipment and equipment used to carry people. For mobile work equipment, these include design, stability, rollover protection, protective equipment/harnesses, emergency braking, lighting etc.

“Lifting equipment” covers lifting equipment and any attachments for anchoring, fixing or support it, including tools used for lifting or lowering loads (eg, crowbars). Lifting operations must be planned, supervised and carried out safely.

**Equipment suspended at height** – eg, lights, lighting accessories – should have its own independent safety bands to prevent it falling.

**Portable electrical tools** (eg, drills) and hand tools (eg, screwdrivers) must be suitable and safe for use, inspected

# ELECTRICITY

**Electricity can kill, it can inflict shock and burns and cause fires and explosions.**

Work on electrical systems must only be done by suitably trained and competent individuals.

Electrical equipment must be suitable for its work in strength and capability. This is especially important where equipment is regularly used in temporary installations. Always plan for the amount and type of power required. Generators must provide the right power, voltage, and switching ability.

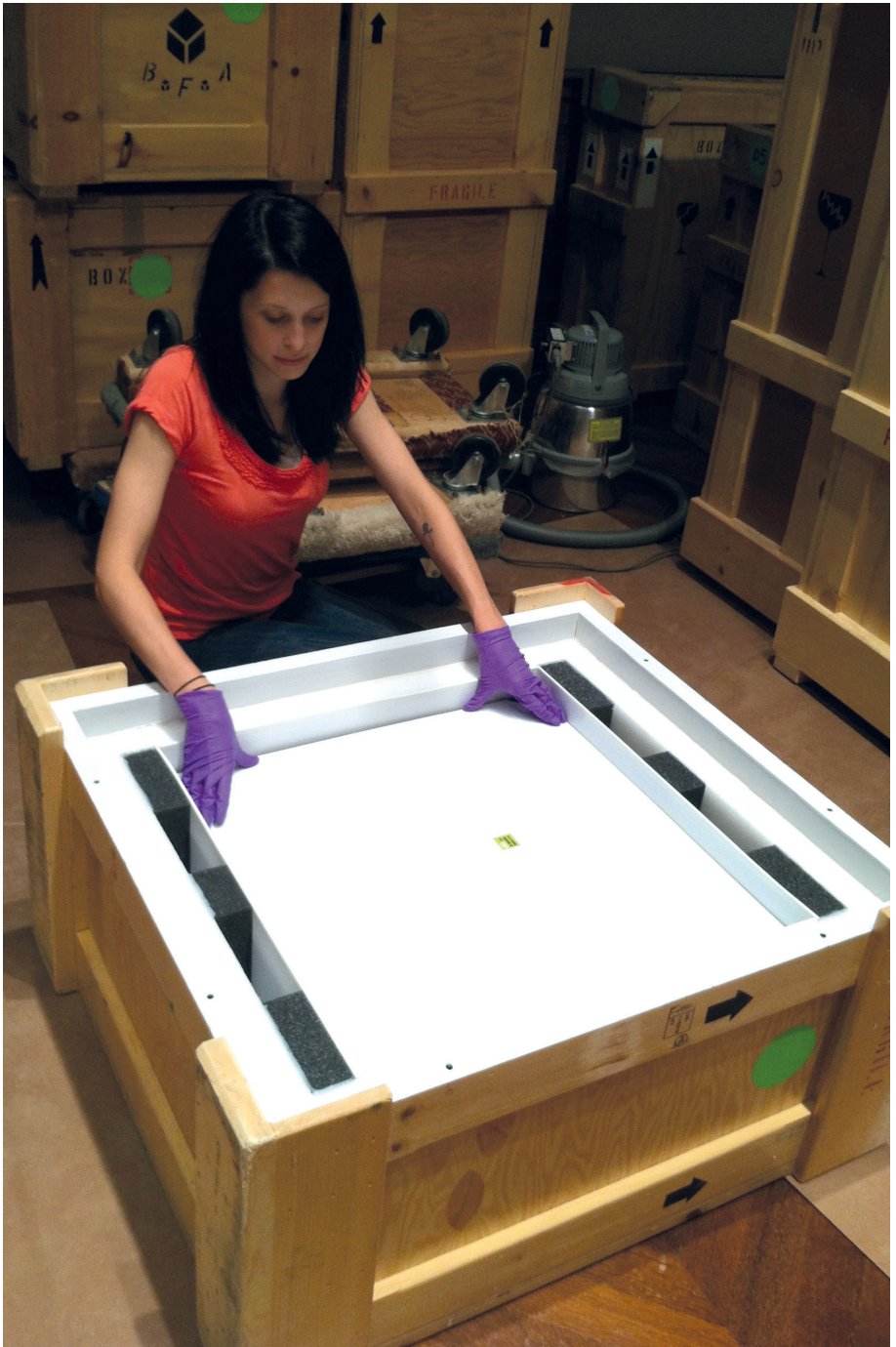
Where multiple phase supply is used, keep cables and appliances on each leg far enough away from each other to avoid the possibility of someone receiving a double electric shock across different phases.

All conductors and equipment, as well as cables, must be properly insulated and adequately earthed. Circuit breakers, such as residual current devices (RCDs), must be used, but not as a substitute for fundamental safety measures (eg, earthing/insulation).

Cables must be safely routed or covered to prevent trips or falls and to protect their integrity and insulation. Keep cable runs as short as possible. Never overheat cables by running them close to heat sources or by running power through them while coiled or tied up.

Ensure all equipment is inspected and tested regularly by supplier(s) and before use – especially equipment used on temporary installations, which is likely to suffer heavy wear and tear. Plugs and connectors used on location should be rigged and built for protection against the weather.

Emergency lighting must have its own independent power source so that a fault in one system cannot jeopardise the other.



# SCAFFOLDS AND TOWERS

**Scaffolds and towers should only be erected, altered or dismantled by experienced, competent riggers.**

There should be clearly defined, safe procedures for building and striking.

Working areas must be adequately lit. In public places, scaffolds must be well lit or have warning lights at the base, with precautions to prevent unauthorised persons gaining access.

Order work equipment well in advance. Cranes or hoists must have a safety certificate and inspection/maintenance register and be thoroughly inspected after installation.

There must be an exclusion zone with notices posted directly below any area where riggers are working.

Before building, inspect the area and ground surface. Avoid possible contact with overhead power lines or other obstructions. Ensure adequate founding to prevent slipping or sinking. Use base plates or sole plates if surfaces are uneven or not firm. Scaffold foundations must be capable of carrying and spreading the load imposed.

Tubing, clamps, boards, etc, must be clean and in good condition, and examined for faults or damage before use during assembly and striking.

Scaffolds and towers more than 30 feet high should be tied to a separate secure structure at regular intervals. Use stabilisers and outriggers where possible.

Ladders and access points should be located within the structure.

Assess wind loading where outside structures carry drapes, sheeting or flats that could present a solid surface to the wind.

Never move mobile towers with people or equipment on board.

Aluminium “zip-up” towers should only be raised or lowered by competent operators in line with the manufacturer’s or supplier’s instructions.

A completed scaffold or tower should be inspected by a competent person to ensure that it is safe before anyone other than a rigger is allowed onto it.

It should carry a notice showing its maximum permitted load of people and equipment. During use it should be regularly checked to ensure that it remains safe.

**Relevant law:** *Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992; Construction (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1996; Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998; Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998.*



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