

Survey Reveals Poor Welfare Facilities on UK Construction Sites

The assistant head of the UK's largest trade union has said construction companies with poor welfare facilities "can and should be prosecuted" after a new survey found there was no drinking water on nearly one in five sites in the UK.

The September 2017 poll of more than 3,500 Unite members working in construction also found that 22% of sites lacked hot water and 14% had no cold water.

In addition, the findings revealed 17% of sites had no women's toilets and that lavatory facilities were described as "inadequate" by 18% of respondents; one in ten sites did not supply toilet paper, half did not have any showers and many others did not provide sufficient soap or sanitary bins.

Workers also raised concerns over the cleanliness of their welfare facilities. More than 40% of respondents said toilets were not cleaned daily.

Speaking about the findings at the Institution of Civil Engineers Health Summit in London on 22 January, Unite's National Officer for Construction, Jerry Swain said: "Welfare facilities are at the heart of any good construction site [...] This is not the message we should be sending out in 21st century Britain. We should be telling our workers that they are valued [and] that their health and welfare are valued by their employer."

Employers must provide welfare facilities, including drinking water, washing and sanitary facilities, under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary at Unite, said: "Providing toilets and washing facilities is not a luxury; they are a basic human right. This survey must act as a wake-up call to the construction industry. Unite is working with the Health and Safety Executive to ensure standards are improved."

Source: IOSH Magazine

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