

# Making housing construction sites secure against unauthorised public access

## Introduction

Unauthorised entry to housing construction sites may expose people (including children) to a number of hazards that, if not controlled, may cause fatalities or serious injuries.

Regulation 298 of the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012* requires the person with management or control of a workplace where construction work is carried out must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace is secured from unauthorised access.

This is to ensure that members of the public are not exposed to risk arising from the construction work.

The regulation is deliberately not prescriptive, to recognise that different locations will have different risks. For that reason it's important to allow flexibility in how to comply.

Nonetheless, WorkSafe Tasmania has received many queries from builders asking what specifically is required of them. Therefore this guidance note provides some specific guidance.

## Scope

This guidance applies to the construction, renovation or extension of:

- detached houses
- attached dwellings, separated from each other by a fire resisting wall, such as terrace, row or town houses
- a building containing two or more sole-occupancy units each being a separate dwelling
- boarding and guest houses, hostels or similar with a floor area less than 300 m<sup>2</sup>
- non-habitable buildings, such as private garages, carports and sheds.

These are based on classes 1a, 1b, 2 and 10 of the Building Code of Australia.

Multi-storey buildings (that is, those above three habitable storeys) are not included in the scope of this guidance note.

A house that is occupied while being renovated may not require security fencing. However, the person with management or control of a workplace should consider the risks associated with the construction work to determine if there is or is not a need for security fencing.

## Who is responsible for installing fencing around house construction?

A principal contractor must be appointed to a construction project where the project's value exceeds \$250,000.

The principal contractor has a number of duties under the regulations. They are responsible for the health and safety of anyone who may be affected by the building work on the site, and is therefore responsible for erecting fencing where required.

## When is fencing needed around house construction?

Unauthorised visitors may not be deterred by warning signs, have no awareness of the dangers that may be present on a residential building site, and have no idea of the risks they may be exposed to once on the site. These risks can include serious injury from falls from partially-constructed houses and scaffolding, electric shock from live cables, drowning in open excavations, suffocation or crushing from collapsing material, coming into contact with hazardous substances, and falling onto protruding reinforcement bars.

Ideally, all hazards and risks should be eliminated on the site, but this is not always achievable.

Fencing can be an effective way of restricting unauthorised entry to a housing construction site when hazards are present.

The principal contractor should strongly consider installing a fence around a housing construction site when it is:

- in the proximity of a school or on a route travelled by children to and from school
- close to parks or recreational areas
- in a built up area.

The attached checklist can be used to guide your decision making.

## What type of fence is needed?

The perimeter fence must be adequate for its purpose and the following characteristics should be considered when determining the fence construction:

- it should be of a suitable height to deter entry
- it should be difficult to climb
- it should be difficult to gain access underneath
- it should be stable and able to withstand anticipated wind loads
- any gates and joints in the fence should be securely connected to prevent someone from finding a weak point for entry.

Existing boundary fences are acceptable provided they sufficiently restrict access to the construction site.

The following is not considered satisfactory fencing:

- sheets of reinforcing mesh, as it allows children to get hand and foot holds to climb over, and because the protruding ends of sheets could result in penetrating injuries
- barrier mesh/fencing with star pickets, as this can easily be accessed over or under.

## Signage

The principal contractor must ensure there is sufficient signage that is clearly visible from outside the workplace or the work area of the workplace.

Signage must specify the principal contractor's name and telephone contact numbers (including an after hours telephone number) and the location of the site office for the project (if any).

If the project is valued at less than \$250,000, signage is not required by the regulations. However, it is good practice and recommended that you display signage anyway.

## Acknowledgement

This is based on a guidance note that was originally and jointly prepared by the WorkCover Authority of NSW, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and WorkSafe Victoria. The checklist was adapted from a publication prepared by the WorkCover Authority of NSW.

## CHECK LIST FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY FENCING

| <b>PART 1</b>  |            |           |
|--|------------|-----------|
| This checklist will help you to determine if you need safety and security fencing for your construction site. If you tick 'yes' to any question, you may need to install fencing.  |            |           |
| Known hazards and potential risks  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| Is the site near to other residential buildings where children may play out of site working hours? Is  |            |           |
| Is the site near to local schools or routes that children may take home?   |            |           |
| Are there excavations on site- eg open trenches, utilities, pier holes or swimming pools?  |            |           |
| Are there any impaling materials left on site – eg reo bars, nails in timber or from work materials?   |            |           |
| Is there a potential for collapse – eg concrete formwork or battered areas of soil from side cuts?   |            |           |
| Is there a potential for unauthorised access on the site by any individuals?<br>Consider access:<br>To hazardous materials<br>To plant materials<br>Overnight or when the site is unsupervised<br>By climbing over or under the existing fence<br>To electricity or services<br>To scaffolding, upper storey floor levels, ladders or penetrations |            |           |
| Are there any other hazards on site that need to be isolated?  |            |           |
| If you tick 'yes' to any of the questions but choose not to install fencing, explain here how you will secure the site:  |            |           |

**PART 2**

Where you have decided that you need to fence your construction site, this checklist will help you to ensure that your fencing meets work health and safety requirements. If you tick 'no' to any question, you need to address the issue before starting work.

| Criteria for Safety and Security Fencing   | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Is the fencing constructed from suitable, dedicated materials with no holes or gaps?   |     |    |
| Are the fencing panels difficult to climb?   |     |    |
| Is access under or through the fence barricaded - ie no gaps throughout the construction process?  |     |    |
| Is fencing erected on a firm foundation throughout the construction process?   |     |    |
| Is the fencing installed on level ground - ie a lean of less than three degrees out of vertical?   |     |    |
| Is the fence erected in a general straight line within the site boundary?  |     |    |
| If you have temporary fencing, is it erected within the boundaries of the construction site?<br>(If fencing protrudes onto public areas, you need permission from the council.)  |     |    |
| Are electrical turrets external to the installed fence?  |     |    |
| Is fencing stable and able to withstand any anticipated loads to which it will be subjected - including wind loads, persons attempting to scale it, forces caused by people in heavy pedestrian areas or impact forces from vehicles or plant? |     |    |
| Is fencing installed in line with the designers, manufacturers and supplier's instructions and specifications?   |     |    |
| Are adequate support brackets installed – especially if shade cloth, signage or advertisements are installed on any section of the fencing?  |     |    |
| Are all fence fittings – including clamps – installed securely, with the nuts on the inside for added security?  |     |    |
| Do fencing gates provide the same level of security as the rest of the fence? (locks and chains should be fitted for added site security and safety)   |     |    |
| Are gates overlapped so they can be locked easily, and are they reasonably level for opening safely?   |     |    |
| Does signage on the fence include relevant information – including 24 hour emergency contact name and telephone numbers,   |     |    |
| Are all fencing panels handled safely and stored in the flat (horizontal) position?  |     |    |
| Is the fence regularly inspected (weekly, dependent on the work and activities undertaken on site) to ensure it is safe, secure and still fit for purpose?   |     |    |

Note: Fencing can only be removed from the site when all hazards, including site waste, have been removed.

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