

Wates Group 'Bin the Broom'

Building the business case for prevention

'Bin the Broom' is Wates' health campaign to reduce the amount of dust on their sites, through better control of dust at source. It has involved raising awareness with the project teams and supply chain around the health risks from dust and how to reduce those risks, through hazard elimination, workplace and process modification, and effective extraction and suppression solutions. In just 12 months it is already bringing benefits to the bottom line, improving employee relations, demonstrating social responsibility and reducing exposures to dust!



Leading from the top

"The purposely provocative title created a huge buzz around the topic and led to familiarity and understanding of the underlying messages", states Kelly Osborne, Senior SHE Advisor & Occupational Health Lead at Wates. The campaign involves everyone: the operational, commercial and bid teams, and maintenance and inspection personnel, as well as the workers on the ground.

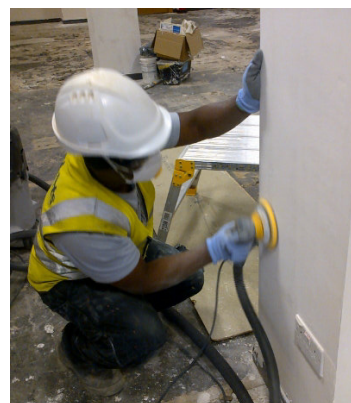
Planning

Supply chains have been actively included in the bid process, recognised as experts and contributing their knowledge so that the most cost effective, innovative ways of working are proposed.

At pre-construction stage, the commercial team gives preference, when ordering, to on-tool extraction or suppression solutions where dust is captured at source. Subcontractors are required to hire the correct equipment or additional fittings to meet the Wates standards if they do not own their own tools.

Delivery

Reducing workers' exposure to dust remains a priority right through the build programmes. The workforce, including that of subcontractors, is involved during the risk assessment process. New and good practice is emphasised and demonstrated, there is a focus on maintenance and inspection of extraction and respiratory protection equipment, and supervisors drive through improvements. There is effective management control, which ensures proper planning for dusty activities, inductions and 'Start Right' briefings for staff and subcontractors, and monitoring.



Support

Supporting collateral has raised awareness and promoted the core messages in relevant ways. The company newsletter has encouraged everyone to play their part and provides regular updates, including in a special 'Bin the Broom' edition. 'Bin the Broom' posters and leaflets, also aimed at all staff, have been widely distributed on all sites; these contain hard-hitting "Dust Can Kill" facts, things to consider to minimise risk, and make it clear who to go to for advice and help. Visual standards clearly show best practice for processes such as concrete/masonry cutting, joinery, internal finishes and demolition/breaking out, segregating dusty work and controlling general site dust, as well as monitoring dusty site activities. A specific product hire brochure, being developed in conjunction with A-Plant, will identify a wide range of tools and equipment on the market to control and manage dust. It will highlight which tools are best matched to the job and include specifics such as add-on accessories, filters and dust bags.

These materials are also issued to subcontractors for consideration when planning their works, used by the bid and commercial teams to underline the Wates focus on improving health in the workplace, and by the operational team to help with tool box talks.

Results to date

Good practice is now commonplace: fewer brooms and more vacuums; more extraction and suppression solutions; less reliance on RPE alone; an increase in purpose-made booths and cutting stations, segregating the dusty work from others; examples of off-site cutting by numerous trades, and of changing a work process to avoid dust creation, eg. fixings to electrical containment to avoid drilling into walls and ordering pre-mixed render to prevent mixing on site; teams researching and sourcing alternative materials with low dust content. And overall:

- a 20% improvement in the number of dusty activities being controlled on site
- a 40% improvement in on-tool extraction and suppression solutions used to control dust at source

Health benefits

- Elimination of risk of exposure to airborne dust for some processes
- Reduced risk of dust exposure for all workers across all sites
- Reduced risk of exposure to other health and safety hazards, including noise and vibration, and flying particles.

Results to date

Financial

- Cost savings on tool hire, skip hire, landfill waste and extraction equipment, from off-site material cutting
- Cost efficiencies:
 - from the use of PVC skirting as an alternative to finished timber skirting which eliminates the need for sanding, priming, filling and painting
 - from tool extraction and suppression solutions, which reduce the total requirement for RPE and vacuums at extra costs
- Shorter programme delivery, from pre-cut boards with a delivery time of four days compared to two weeks for on-site cutting
- Reduced labour through less cleaning, from on-tool and extraction equipment
- Adding value to the bid process through supply chain innovations in alternative materials and equipment, and off-site manufacturing

Employee relations

- Widespread buy-in of better practices
- Company-wide culture change, with increasing ownership of health issues
- Valued and effective induction and training programmes
- Improved site conditions and better morale

Social responsibility

- Demonstration that occupational health is a priority, by going beyond compliance, leading with advocacy and treating health like safety

All of the principles of the Bin Campaign have been communicated across the business and monitored. The work now is around continuing to communicate and share best practice as well as drive consistency across the Wates Group.