

Domestic loft conversions

What you need to know as a busy builder

Want to run a safe loft conversion project? These are the essential top tips you should follow, even if you don't directly employ the people working on your site

Planning and preparation

- If the house was built before 2000, it may contain asbestos. An asbestos survey will show if it needs to be removed by a licensed contractor before work starts.
- Check where the electricity supply enters the property and turn off the supply before working on or near existing cables.
 - If the work area, or scaffolding, is near to overhead wires, the supply company should insulate them before you start work.
- When removing loft insulation, wear eye protection and gloves and an FFP3 mask to prevent breathing in dust.
- Make sure all structural alterations and propping systems are planned and installed properly.
- Use equipment like gin wheels or hoists to make lifting and carrying easier.
- Only a Gas Safe Registered engineer should remove or alter a flue, or install or disconnect a gas appliance.
- Make sure there is access to toilets and washing facilities with hot water and soap.

Work at height

- Stop people and equipment falling from open edges of the roof, gable ends, dormer extensions and lofts.
 - Use a scaffold which has guardrails, midrails and toeboards, and brick guards if necessary.
 - Install floor boarding when work starts, to prevent falls between joists or through ceilings.
 - Make sure ladders are tied and secure.
 - Install stairs to the loft as early as possible.

Housekeeping

- Keep walkways, stairs and work areas clear and free from obstructions such as trailing cables, rubbish and materials.
 - Put skips where they can be filled easily and collected safely.
 - Do not throw things from the scaffold or the loft; use a chute to the skip.
 - Explain to everyone on site the importance of keeping their work area clear and enforce it.
- Store timber flat rather than upright, and make sure pallets used to stack materials are in good condition, on firm ground and not leaning.

Fee for Intervention

HSE now recovers the costs of time spent dealing with material breaches of health and safety law. This is known as Fee for Intervention (FFI). FFI generally applies when an inspector finds something wrong that they believe is serious enough for them to write to you about. A fee is charged for the time spent by the inspector in sorting it out. Following the simple guidance on this sheet may help you to avoid having to pay a fee.



Unacceptable practice



Acceptable practice

What can happen if health and safety is ignored?

An inspector visited a site and found that workers were at risk from falling from the edge of a roof. The company was prosecuted and fined £10 000 and ordered to pay more than £5000 costs.



What can happen if health and safety is ignored?

A joiner was badly injured when he fell between the floor joists. No floor boarding had been provided. The company was prosecuted, and fined £5000 and ordered to pay £5518 costs.

This is just a summary – you can find out what else you need to know about health and safety by visiting www.hse.gov.uk/construction. Other Busy Builder leaflets are available at www.hse.gov.uk/construction/areyou/builder.htm

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The Working Well Together campaign aims to improve health and safety in the construction industry, particularly in small and micro businesses. For more information visit www.wwt.uk.com



This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.