Communication on Site Toolbox Talk

Key points, do's and don'ts, and questions with answers. The attendance sign-off sheet is on the last page.

Asked to show your toolbox talk records? The Site Book keeps each talk and its signatures with the job, on Pro: **thesitebook.co.uk/features/toolbox-talks**

Key points to cover

- CDM 2015 Regulation 8 requires duty holders to cooperate, coordinate, and communicate with each other to ensure health and safety
- CDM 2015 Regulation 14 requires the principal contractor to make arrangements for consultation with workers and their representatives
- All safety signs on site must comply with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 — using standard shapes, colours, and pictograms
- Every worker must receive a site-specific induction before starting work, covering hazards, rules, emergency procedures, and welfare arrangements
- Method statement briefings must be delivered to all workers involved in the task — not just issued on paper
- Where workers do not speak fluent English, communication must be provided in a language they understand — use translated documents, multilingual supervisors, or visual aids

Do's and don'ts

Do

- Brief workers face-to-face on method statements before each task — check understanding by asking questions, not just asking 'any questions?'
- Use pictograms and visual aids alongside text-based safety information
- Provide translated safety documents for workers whose first language is not English
- Hold daily briefings to communicate the day's tasks, hazards, and any changes to the programme
- Encourage workers to speak up about hazards and near misses — create a blame-free reporting culture

Don't

- Never assume a worker has understood a method statement just because they have signed it
- Never use text-only safety signs — pictograms are legally required and understood regardless of language
- Never skip the site induction or allow workers to start without it, regardless of time pressure
- Never ignore a worker who appears confused or uncertain about a task — stop and re-brief them
- Never rely on email or notice boards alone for safety-critical communication — face-to-face briefing is essential

Questions to check understanding

Ask each question and let the crew answer before you read out the answer.

Q1. Why is face-to-face communication more effective than written-only methods on construction sites?

Answer: Many construction workers have limited literacy, English may not be their first language, and written documents can be technical and difficult to understand. Face-to-face briefings allow the supervisor to explain the task in plain language, use visual aids and demonstrations, check understanding by asking questions, and allow workers to raise concerns. HSE guidance emphasises that signing a method statement is not evidence of understanding — verbal briefing with a two-way conversation is essential.

Q2. What must a site induction cover under CDM 2015?

Answer: A site-specific induction must cover: the site layout and access routes; specific hazards on the site; site rules (PPE requirements, speed limits, smoking areas, exclusion zones); emergency procedures (assembly points, fire alarm, first aid locations); welfare facilities (toilets, drying rooms, canteen, drinking water); reporting procedures for accidents, near misses, and hazards; the management structure and who to contact with concerns; and any specific environmental or community considerations.

Q3. How should you communicate safety information to workers who do not speak fluent English?

Answer: Use a combination of approaches: provide translated documents in the worker's first language; use multilingual supervisors or interpreters for verbal briefings; use pictograms, diagrams, and photographs in method statements and signage; pair non-English speakers with a bilingual buddy who can translate on the job; use demonstration and practical examples rather than verbal instruction alone; and check understanding through questions and observation, not just asking 'do you understand?'. HSE's 'Working in Great Britain from overseas' guidance gives employers further advice on workers from overseas.

Attendance sign-off sheet: Communication on Site Toolbox Talk

Everyone who attended prints their name and signs to confirm they received this talk.

Date _____ **Time** _____

Site or location _____ **Presented by** _____

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Presenter's signature _____

This is general guidance for UK construction sites. Check it against your own risk assessment, method statement and the site before you deliver it. Toolbox talk from The Site Book, reviewed 26 October 2026. Read it online at thesitebook.co.uk/toolbox-talks/communication-on-site.