

A study of health and safety management on construction sites, for construction c...



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A Study of Health & Safety Management on Construction Sites, for construction companies within Riyadh city in Saudi Arabia

Background The construction industry has a record for being one of the most unsafe environments to operate in. (Grimaldi and Simonds, 1984) This argument is corroborated by the fact that for an average construction job in the United Kingdom, one worker is lost every three days. (Allan, 2001) It must be taken to note over here that such losses result even though there are standards of safety performance on construction sites that are enforced. Similar to much of Western Europe, the United States too has the OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) to prescribe minimum construction site safety standards. While this may stand true for more developed nations, however, nations such as Saudi Arabia are still trying to tackle with a high construction rate coupled with a low safety assessment and enforcement methodology. Overall, there is no single governmentally sponsored safety assessment and enforcement system within Saudi Arabia for the moment. (Fullman, 1984) Though there has been a move forward by the creation of the “ Saudi Building Code National Committee” but as yet work within the safety and health portfolios remains scant and as yet experimental. (Mena Report, 2006) The lack of coherent safety assessment and enforcement schemes implies that there is still much ground that needs to be covered as per the Saudi safety standards in general and construction safety standards in particular are concerned. Hence, the need for research into current safety practices arises based on the concerns noted above so as to have a baseline available before policy making on safety begins. The

proposed research aims at plugging some gaps in the current research base so as to expand horizons. The other question now, is the methodology that ought to be applied in order to conduct meaningful research. Research Design and Requirements Design As related in a previous proposal, the current research will be geared to answer the following questions: To what extent can safety management be applied on construction sites for construction companies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia? What are the core differences in safety rules and regulations between Saudi and Britain? The research is aimed at including all sizes of construction businesses operating within Saudi Arabia in an effort to present a realistic and reflective picture of practices on ground. The contention is that safety questionnaires will be delivered to staff of various construction companies on site to answer. The effectiveness of this method has been related before and there is little need to repeat it here again. Rationale for Research Methods It must be noted that safety questionnaires will be discussed with relevant personnel before being handed out for filling as there is the belief that construction industry safety awareness is low. (Omani, 2008) Furthermore, site safety surveys will also be carried out to ascertain the actual position on ground. The reason behind self initiated site safety surveys is based on the fact that certain construction companies in Saudi Arabia have next to no safety standards in practice and thus their workers are not educated to deal with such surveys. It must also be kept in mind here that a sizeable proportion of construction industry workers operating within Saudi Arabia are of foreign origin and will only respond to their mother tongues and regionalised dialects. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that most of these foreign workers are often

uneducated and can therefore not be expected to respond to English.

(Mouawad, 2008) Personal interaction with these workers on ground is necessary to discovering the actual perils they have to deal with by utilising a concerned supervisor of any particular construction company. (Jannadi and Assaf, 1998) Primary versus Secondary Research Matters are further complicated by the fact that there exist little research records of actual safety surveys for construction sites around Saudi Arabia. Industrial managers and other professionals within the Saudi construction industry themselves feel that the Saudi safety system needs to be updated in order to deliver results. (Omani, 2008) Another major contention is the fact that construction site deaths are not only frequent but also publicised beyond borders which earn Saudi Arabia bad name and discourage foreign workers from coming in to work. (Husain, 2011) Choosing Location Saudi Arabia is currently faced with a growing population of young people who will need employment within the next decade or so due to a high birth rate within the last few decades. The current government is poised in expanding work opportunities in record time to rise up to this challenge. For this task, myriad construction sites have sprung up throughout the domain of Saudi Arabia. (Mouawad, 2008) Given also that Riyadh is the capital of Saudi Arabia, most construction companies and their head offices are based in or around Riyadh while a lot of construction activity proceeds in this region. (Millington, 2009) Initiating contact and obtaining permissions from construction companies of all sizes and backgrounds can be highly simplified if Riyadh is used as the base of operations for these surveys. Conclusion The construction industry in Saudi Arabia is growing at an unprecedented rate but there is a dire lack of

safety regulation. Lack of initiative in terms of safety regulation has produced patchy pieces of research that are often ill connected or absent altogether. Sources of secondary research are unable to fulfil the objectives of this research. In order to fulfil the initially outlined objectives of the research proposed, it is suggested that the researcher be allowed to conduct primary research in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for various reasons outlined above.

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