



THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

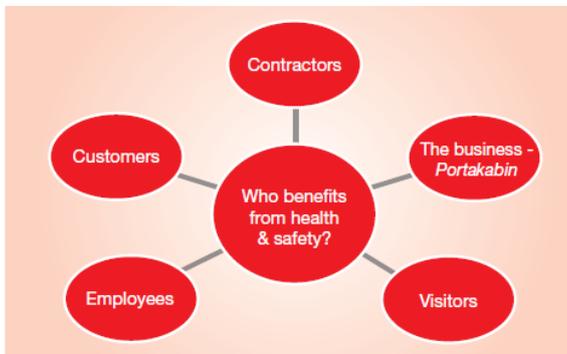
Health & Safety - *Portakabin*

The *Portakabin* brand is the most widely recognised brand in modular construction in the UK. *Portakabin* modular buildings provide high quality working environments for many other businesses and organisations, for example, office buildings and schools through to hospitals and hospitality suites. Health and safety policies form a key component of the *Portakabin*



Corporate Social Responsibility document and are an integral part of the business. *Portakabin* not only constructs and sells new modular buildings but also hires out buildings, for example, when a school needs interim accommodation quickly. Therefore, health and safety is a key consideration in each of these situations, especially in relation to a safe environment for children to work and play in. The overall responsibility for health and safety in a company rests with the Board of Directors. They ensure that effective H&S policies and practices

are in place in the company. However, health and safety is the responsibility of everyone who works for a company. Training is vital to ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them. Focusing on health and safety protects employees in every activity that they carry out. Health and safety also protects customers and the wider public as well as contractors working for a company. Companies have overall responsibility for the health and safety of their employees and others. The responsibility of the



company relates to creating and implementing the overall framework, e.g. policies, procedures and training which create a good health and safety culture. However, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employees also have responsibilities.

To carry out risk management effectively a company needs to have an overall safety management system. *Portakabin* has a safety management system that includes the following elements:

- a general statement of intent (commitment to health and safety)
- identification of who is responsible for H&S
- reporting structure (what H&S reports will be produced, by whom and for whom)
- arrangements for H&S (the actual details of H&S practice)
- identification of legal requirements and how these are being met
- objectives and targets (setting the internal standards to be achieved)
- monitoring and measuring (e.g. recording incidents to check objectives are met)
- periodic review for continual improvement e.g. recording incidents/accidents to check they are closed.

One of the most important parts of the safety management system at *Portakabin* is the identification of where responsibility for H&S lies. *Portakabin* has put in place comprehensive documentation that clearly shows what employees are responsible for, such as:

- Taking care of their own health and safety and that of fellow employees.
- Reporting any accidents/incidents or near-misses which might lead to injury.
- Using the correct tools and equipment in line with training and instructions.
- Knowing emergency procedures at the location where they are working.

Appropriate training is given depending on the individual person's role. *Portakabin* employs fulltime H&S professionals who are qualified at degree or diploma level specifically in health and



THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

safety. *Portakabin's* commitment to health and safety is demonstrated through the achievement of OHSAS 18001, where these key aspects are covered:

- a. **Risk policy.** This sets out that *Portakabin* aims to achieve 'the prevention of injury and ill health and the promotion of the health and well-being of all employees'.
- b. **Risk identification.** Companies assess all health and safety risks which are documented as part of a wider risk register. Safety procedures are then put in place to reduce or limit these risks.
- c. **Training.** H&S training for new employees is initially carried out during an induction programme. This covers all company procedures that directly affect the new employee and establishes a strong health and safety awareness. Existing employees regularly receive update training.
- d. **Measuring and monitoring.** *Portakabin* regularly carries out checks to make sure that its health and safety practice is continually improving. Careful attention to health and safety adds value to a company and its products.

Having a strong health and safety record enhances brand image. It also means that the company is able to deliver the right products at the right time with the minimum of delay and safely. This is vital in the highly competitive construction industry. The overall impact of these benefits is to make *Portakabin* a supplier of choice because it provides the company with a competitive edge over rivals. The esteem in which the company is held by customers impacts positively on employee motivation. For the company the strong health and safety record substantially reduces downtime (i.e. time lost to inactivity) and associated costs and creates a safe culture. Accidents caused by injury at work potentially create substantial losses to a business and are de-motivating to the workforce. The accident incident rate for *Portakabin* (under RIDDOR) is 37.7% less than the average in the construction industry.

Questions

1. What is the piece of legislation relating to health and safety in the UK?
2. Describe the health and safety responsibilities of senior management.
3. Explain the costs involved with health and safety in the workplace.
4. Analyse the benefits of having effective health and safety provision.

Task

Research – Using the Health and Safety Executive website (www.hse.gov.uk), investigate what health and safety issues you would need to consider if you were starting up a business that had more than five employees. You may find the 'New to Health and Safety' section and the 'What you need to know' leaflet helpful. Create a poster, presentation or information leaflet of your findings.

What have you learned?

Create a summary circle of your learning from the Health and Safety session. Identify the number of key points raised in the session. Divide a circle into this number of segments and add each key point to the segment, keeping each point as brief as possible. Use icons, images and colour to aid recall.