



**Temporary Works
forum**

Promoting best practice in
the construction industry.

TW21.138 (6.1.22)

TWf Information Sheet No. 15

Safety Alert Protocol: Temporary Works

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The circulation of factually incorrect, misleading or poorly written information contained in a safety alert can and does repeatedly cause unnecessary confusion within the industry. There can also be unwarranted reputational damage. Once issued the author loses control of the document as it is passed from company to company, around the world, often being re-issued or rebranded with a different company letter head (and even re-appearing years after it was first issued).
- 1.2 In some cases, the misinformation can have the opposite effect to that intended by the author. For example, it may negatively affect confidence; ultimately compromising safety in the workplace. It is important to prevent such situations to maintain the highest levels of safety and eliminate the unnecessary time and resource wasted trying to address outdated or unfounded concerns.
- 1.3 This safety alert protocol has been developed to help prevent such situations. The intention is to provide clear concise guidance and a template to those considering issuing a safety alert following a temporary works related incident as well as to those considering forwarding a safety alert they may have received to others.
- 1.4 Whilst this protocol is primarily written for those considering issuing safety alerts to third parties, organisations may also wish to consider its use for internal purposes.
- 1.5 The Temporary Works Forum (TWf) urges all those aware of an incident to report it to CROSS-UK, Collaborative Reporting for Safer Structures UK (CROSS-UK)

NOTE:

This protocol is modelled on the MEWP Safety Alert Protocol issued by the UK Strategic Forum Plant Safety Group (SFPSG) MEWPs Group, <https://www.ipaf.org/en-gb/news/2017/03/uk-strategic-forum-plant-safety-group-mewps-group-develops-safety-alert-protocol>

2.0 Aim

- 2.1 The purpose of this guidance is to develop a standard approach to the generation and circulation of safety alerts.

NOTE:

Whilst aimed at temporary works it is hoped that this guidance is applicable to any incident.

3.0 Definition and Purpose

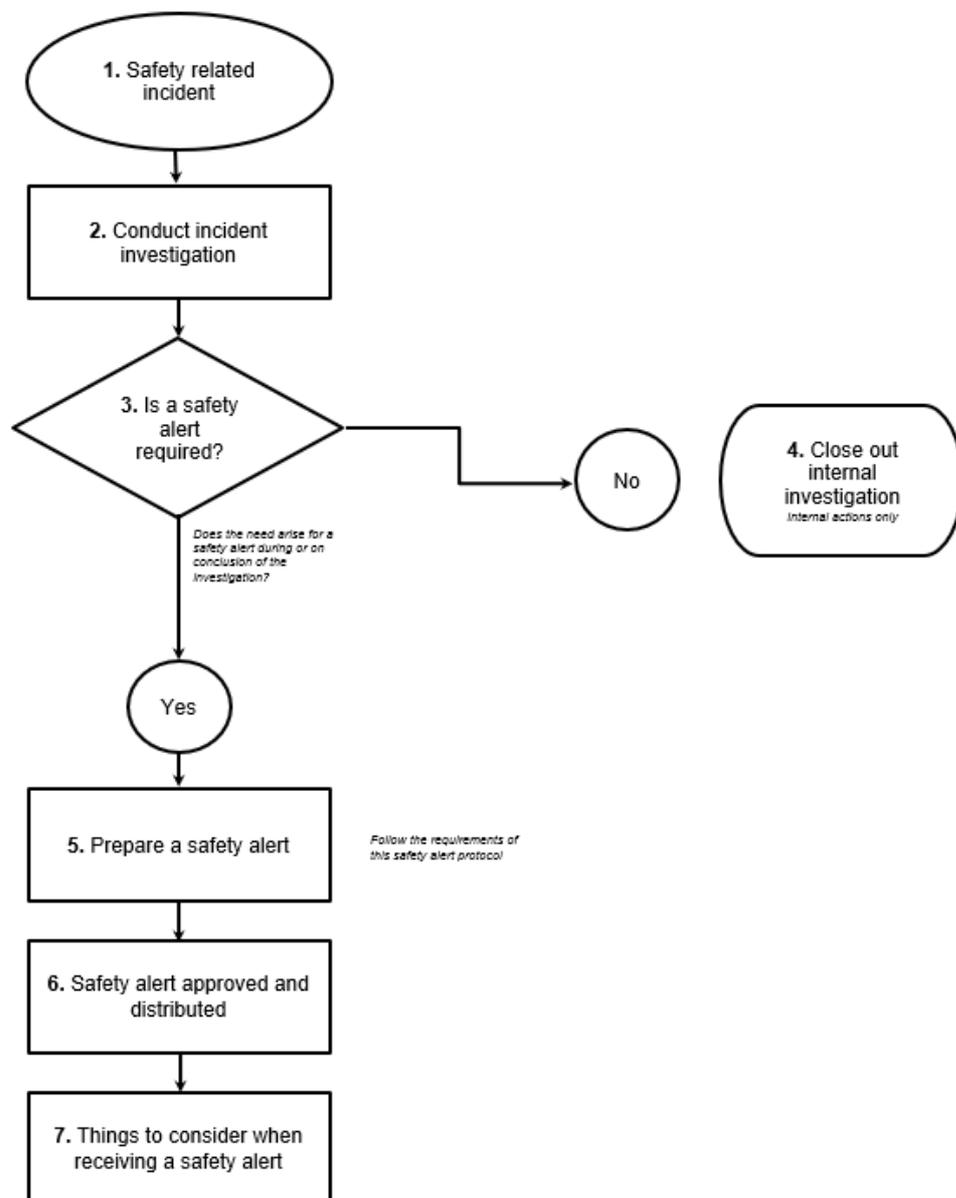
3.1 The definition and purpose of a safety alert is:

“A communication distributed, following an incident, to share known facts and learning following an investigation; and where others may benefit from distribution of the learning experience.”

4.0 Flowchart

NOTE:

This protocol assumes that an investigation is completed prior to publishing an alert. Care should be taken if issuing a safety alert during an investigation.





5.0 Notes

Flowchart – Step 1:

Safety related incident

5.1.1 Those involved in a safety related incident, which may compromise their safety or that of others, should report it immediately to their line manager/employer to ensure that corrective actions can be taken to prevent injury, or occurrence of a similar incident.

Flowchart – Step 2:

Conduct incident investigation

5.2.1 It is important that any safety related incident is investigated fully. This may involve contacting those with a contractual or specialist interest, e.g. manufacturer, supplier, client, other contractor(s), etc. Where appropriate they should all be directly involved in the investigation process.

NOTE:

Depending on the seriousness and nature of the incident it may also require notification to the relevant enforcement authority in accordance with RIDDOR, <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/>. In such cases - and where reasonably practicable - consideration should be given to preservation of the scene/evidence until contact has been made with the enforcing authority.

5.2.2 Consideration should also be given to seeking help and advice from appropriate industry-related bodies.

Flowchart – Step 3:

Does the need arise for a safety alert during or on conclusion of the investigation?

5.3.1 There is no requirement to automatically produce a safety alert following a safety related incident. It is likely that many investigations will not require a safety alert being issued.

5.3.2 There are many factors that should be considered when deciding whether to proceed with preparing and distributing a safety alert (see **Table 1** and **Table 2**). Each point is not mutually exclusive, but all the factors should be considered collectively to make a balanced decision. The lists are not exhaustive.



Table 1 - Factors AGAINST issuing a safety alert

An adequate level of investigation has not been carried out

NOTE:

Take great care if providing a view on the quality of a manufacturers' product. Legal proceedings may result.

The information relevant to the incident may be unreliable

The information is supposition

Incident investigation identifies non-compliance with operational standards or good practice guidance, which can be communicated to an identified and limited audience by other means

Someone or some organisation is better placed and more informed to send out the information

The information is already in public domain

Where relevant, the manufacturer or supplier has not been contacted and made aware of the incident

Knowledgeable and/or interested parties are justifiably contesting the factual content or recommendations

The alert is only being issued due to unjustifiable pressure from outside influences

Standing down equipment, e.g. machines, internally during preliminary investigations

NOTE:

This is an issue for a restricted company internal communication not a broader safety alert

The document discusses or apportions blame

Table 2 - Factors FOR issuing a safety alert

The information is reliable and/or the risk(s) significant

The information is factual and can be substantiated

Issuing the alert may reduce the likelihood of a similar incident

There is potentially serious risk to others if the information is not shared without delay

The potential consequences from a similar incident are severe

The risk and consequences of not controlling the risk are clearly stated

Recommendations for action are proportionate to the identified risk

Where it is identified that intentional defeating of safety device (for example) has been identified as widespread and regular

The manufacturer or supplier have been contacted and are aware of the incident and the intention to produce a safety alert

It is relevant to others and these persons/organisations have been identified clearly

It states why it has been circulated and identifies expected actions

Legal requirements, standards and good practice guidance if included, are accurate and correctly referenced

It is accepted that the alert may be distributed in a public forum



Flowchart – Step 4:

NO – Close out Internal investigation – internal actions only

5.4.1 If, after considering all the points in **Step 3**, it is decided that aspects of the incident do not warrant producing a safety alert for wider distribution, then the internal investigation can be concluded. Where company procedures require an in-house safety alert to be produced, it should be clearly marked for internal use only.

Flowchart – Step 5:

YES – Prepare a safety alert in accordance with the recommendations in this protocol

5.5.1 If, after considering all the points in **Step 3**, the decision is to proceed with preparing a safety alert, this should be carried out in consultation with any manufacturer and/or supplier (particularly if they are identifiable, or have their product(s) identified, in the safety alert).

Content of a safety alert

It is important that any safety alert be concise but contain sufficient specific and relevant information to avoid misinterpretation or unnecessary consequences. It is suggested that such information should include at least the following (see **Table 3**):

Table 3 - Content of a safety alert

Ref.	Item
a.)	Unique reference/issue number <i>NOTE: Footnoted on all pages and all pages numbered</i>
b.)	Date of publication
c.)	Name and contact details of person issuing the alert
d.)	Intended target audience of the safety alert
e.)	Type of safety alert <i>NOTE: 'action recommended' or 'for information only'</i>
f.)	Actual date of incident
g.)	Location of incident
h.)	Equipment manufacturer and model involved (if relevant)
i.)	Brief factual description of task being performed
j.)	Brief description of occurrence (incident) <i>NOTE: Any photographs to be of actual incident and accurate</i>
k.)	Significant, relevant findings of investigation <i>NOTE: This should be <u>factual</u> and without apportioning blame</i>
l.)	Recommended actions (if any)
m.)	Status of the investigation, e.g. concluded or ongoing
n.)	Statement declaring that the document is drafted in accordance with this safety alert protocol



NOTE:

Not generally recommended, it may be felt necessary to issue a safety alert during an investigation (and before it has been concluded). Therefore, this should:

- be made clear in the original safety alert; and
- be followed up with a 'close-out' communication when the investigation has been concluded.

Content of any close-out communication

It is important that any close-out communication provide sufficient and relevant information. Such information as a minimum should include (see **Table 4**):

Table 4 - Content of any close-out communication

Ref.	Item
i.)	Unique reference/issue number <i>NOTE: Footnoted on all pages and all pages numbered</i>
ii.)	Date of current communication
iii.)	Reference to any previous safety alert(s) issued regarding the incident quoting original reference information and original date of publication
iv.)	Copy of or summary of content of the original alert
v.)	Name and contact details of person issuing the close out communication
vi.)	Intended target audience <i>NOTE: This should be the same as the original alert</i>
vii.)	Status of original safety alert <i>NOTE: e.g. 'current' or 'withdrawn'</i>
viii.)	Further actions required (if any)
ix.)	Reference to bulletins from relevant parties (where issued), e.g. HSE, supplier, manufacturer, etc.

Flowchart - Step 6:

Safety alert approved and distributed

5.6.1 The issuing of a safety alert should only be done with the knowledge, approval and authorisation of a company senior manager.

NOTE:

It should only be sent to them after checking and/or peer review. Where specialist advice is involved, it is recommended that a 'head of profession' (or 'subject matter expert') be consulted.



5.6.2 It is strongly recommended that a copy of the safety alert be sent in advance of publication (allowing sufficient time for a response) to any company or person, who may be named (or has their product identified in the safety alert).

5.6.3 You should consider sending a copy of the agreed safety alert to the HSE Complaints and Advice Team (CAT Team), <http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>

5.6.4 **CAUTION:**

With all the electronic means of communication available currently, worldwide distribution of a document is only a few 'clicks' away. Once a safety alert has been issued and is in the public domain, it is impossible to retract!

5.6.5 Before issuing a safety alert be sure to:

- a) double-check the content for factual accuracy and relevance;
- b) reconsider the criteria for and against publication (see Tables 1 and 2);
- c) re-assess the intended purpose of the safety alert;
- d) be specific and clear about its circulation.

REMEMBER:

Internal company circulation is no guarantee that the document will not be shared outside the intended audience. Hence, the importance of clearly marking 'FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY'.

Flowchart – Step 7:

Things to consider when receiving a safety alert and before forwarding

5.7.1 Upon receiving a safety alert, it is essential to consider the relevance and importance of the alert before deciding to forward to others or circulate it internally. Inappropriate action may be counterproductive.

5.7.2 Things to consider when receiving a safety alert:

- 1) Are the actions and/or information in the safety alert relevant to your company (and, as appropriate, supply chain)?
- 2) Does the safety alert adhere to the safety alert protocol? If not, contact the author and consider informing any relevant manufacturer or other interested parties.
- 3) Is the information current or has an update been issued? If in doubt, contact the author of the alert to confirm.

5.7.3 Things to decide before forwarding a safety alert:

- 1) Carefully consider whether further distribution is necessary.
- 2) Clearly identify why and to whom you feel further distribution is of value.
- 3) Consider the intended outcome of forwarding the alert.



5.7.4 If, after having considered these points, it is felt necessary and beneficial to forward the safety alert then:

- Only circulate the alert in its original format.
- Include any extra text or explanation on an additional cover sheet.
- Do not add additional information or hearsay to the text of the original alert.

EXAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR A SAFETY ALERT

Company logo	SAFETY ALERT	
Subject of alert		Ref. No.
Location of incident	Date of incident	Purpose of alert e.g. For information only OR See recommended actions
Equipment involved (if any) e.g. Type, Make, Model, etc.	Investigation status e.g. 'Ongoing' OR 'Closed'	Alert status e.g. 'Interim' OR 'Closed out'
Brief factual description of the task being performed		Add any relevant pictures NOTE: Any pictures must be of the actual incident (or any reconstruction clearly noted).
Brief description of occurrence – Incident		
Significant or relevant findings		
Recommendations		
Author's name	Contact Email address	
Intended circulation e.g. 'Restricted', 'Internal' or 'General'		Date of publication
THIS ALERT HAS BEEN PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SAFETY ALERT PROTOCOL A copy of the protocol and template can be downloaded from www.twforum.org.uk		
Alert reference number:	Date published:	Page x of y