Working Platforms for Piling Plant and the Working Platform Certificate
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why have PFSF members introduced the Working Platform Certificate?

The members of the Piling Federation have developed the Working Platform Certificate to raise awareness of the importance of providing an engineer designed and certificated platform for piling plant to work on – and the importance of continuous maintenance of the platform whilst in use, with appropriate repairs if necessary. Signing the Certificate confirms the awareness of these requirements and commitment to adhere to the requirements.

Why must a working platform be designed for piling rigs?

A working platform is the foundation for plant that may weigh anything between 5 tonnes to 200 tonnes and all of the ancillary equipment that may be used on the platform to service the plant. The demands of the industry forever dictate larger, deeper and more complex foundations be installed for higher load capacities. The machinery is accordingly becoming larger and heavier, often with higher centres of gravity. Every year piling rigs fall over – near misses due to the site surface are even more common. All such incidents involve potential fatalities.

Why isn't it sufficient to simply inspect the working platform visually prior to work commencing?

Attempting to assess the adequacy of a working platform by visual inspection only is one of the failings of the historic practice that the WPC is addressing. Visual assessment can only check the surface of the platform. It is critically important to the performance of the platform to also check the underlying material, the quality of the platform fill, its construction and its depth, and the application of geotextile membranes if required. It is recommended that a geotechnical engineer be engaged to assess the initial design and the effect of any subsequent maintenance & repairs undertaken.

What is meant by maintenance and repair of the Working Platform?

The working platform can deteriorate due to use over time. Additionally, excavations, trenches for services, or other holes dug in the platform must be properly backfilled to avoid creating a soft spot that might give way under the tracks of a piling rig or other plant and equipment. Although stable on a firm surface, a 1sqm soft spot can be sufficient to unbalance a piling rig and cause it to topple over. The edge of the working platform must always be clearly defined and should be regularly inspected to ensure that there has been no degradation over time.

Who has responsibility for the design, installation, maintenance and repair of the Working Platform?

The Main Contractor has a responsibility to ensure that all activities undertaken on a contract site are carried out by suitably qualified persons. The Working Platform Certificate is to be signed by the main contractor to confirm that the design, installation, maintenance and repair of the Working Platform for the piling works has been, and will continue to be, carried out by competent persons. The Certificate does NOT state who will carry out these works, but the Federation members strongly recommend that qualified geotechnical engineers be engaged to undertake the work.

Why doesn't the Piling Contractor take responsibility for the Working Platform?

The design, installation, maintenance and repair of the working platform should be the responsibility of the organisation that has continuous control over ALL site activities – this is invariably the main contractor on site. The working platform will continue to exist after the piling contractor has left the site, and may be used by following trades and the main contractor himself. Accordingly maintenance and repair of the platform may need to continue beyond the end of the piling contract. Even during the piling contract other trades may use the platform and the certificate should also cover their activities.

Who provides the loading requirements for the working platform?

The piling contractor will provide details of the plant and machinery to be used on the working platform, including the bearing pressures, dimensions and working space required to operate the plant and machinery safely. These details should be summarised on the Working Platform Certificate.

Who is responsible for accidents occurring on the Working Platform?

The Working Platform Certificate does not seek to transfer any responsibilities for accidents occurring during the piling contract. Both the Main Contractor and the Piling Contractor already have responsibilities under the O,H&S legislation in the appropriate state in which the work is taking place. The use of the Certificate is a way of highlighting these responsibilities by increasing awareness of working platform safety and the importance of maintaining the platform in good stable condition throughout the piling contract.

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