

## ULTRA ACCESS

# The Dangers of Complacency in Scaffolding

## How Habitualisation can lead to a fatal error on site

In UK Construction, the **British Scaffolding Industry** stands as the backbone of the sector, enabling other workers to access elevated structures and work locations safely, among various other applications - including shoring, encapsulations, and so on.

Its hard, honest graft... that also is considered not only one of the most physically demanding trades, but also one of the most dangerous in the world.

Fortunately, there are numerous safe-guards in place, like; **SSoW's** (**Safe Systems of Work**), **RAMS** (**Risk Assessment Method Statements**), Guidance (**NASC's** TG and SG) and such, along with Permits and other procedures, making it a well managed industry.

However, complacency from the individual - otherwise known as **Habitualisation** - or a state of indifference to familiar hazards, due to excessive experience accompanied by an unawareness of unforeseen actual dangers - poses one of the most insidious threats to anyone working as a scaffold operative, regardless of the processes in place.

Often stemming from regular work routines or even possible overconfidence; complacency erodes the personal vigilance essential for ones safety.

Daily Task Briefings and regularly rotating operatives away from their usual tasks could be a quick and easy way to avoid operatives from falling into the complacency trap.

Got a team (for example) that does one, or a select group of high risk and high responsibility work...?  
Move them away for a few days (if possible), giving them a chance to transition away from **Habitualisation** at the workplace.

Then theres the link to **Behavioural Based Safety (BBS)**, whereas those exposed to excessive risks and dangers regularly could have a negative effect on their Mental Health and eventually their performance at work.



**Habitualisation** (often used interchangeably with **Habituation** in safety contexts) refers to the psychological process where repeated exposure to the same stimuli - such as familiar hazards when working on a scaffold - leads to a decreased response or awareness over time, which becomes complacency.

This is often stated a major cause of (non-falling from height) accidents in the workplace, and could cause a serious issue when working at height, due to the nature of the work.

It might not be always feasible, or "reasonably practicable" to rotate operatives about, from task to task, month to month, etc, but its definitely something to think about, especially when the obligation of DUTY OF CARE is considered.

**After all... a change is as good as a rest, as they say.**