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BRIGHT IDEAS: CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS
AND FUTURE TRENDS IN LIGHTING
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NICK BAKER ARCHITECTS.



Francisca Santos works at Garnett+Partners, whose projects include retail, residential, refurbishment and planning. Born in Porto, Portugal, she studied architecture at the University of Bath.

Taking care: Introduced earlier this month, CDM 15 is set to bring about major changes within the construction industry – not least for the role of the architect, says Garnett & Partners' **Francisca Santos**.



The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has been under political pressure ever since prime minister David Cameron criticised the 'excessive health and safety culture that has become an albatross around the neck for British Industries'. Health and safety has always been considered a controversial topic in the construction industry, and not surprisingly, as it faces another revision to the CDM Regulations. Introduced earlier this month, CDM 15 proposes considerable change, and it will have a big impact in the industry, in practice, and most of all in the role of the architect.

H&S in construction

Following a slow start 21 years ago, the progression of health and safety measures in the construction industry has proved rather successful. Corporate clients are becoming aware of their duties, architects are now more confident and skilful in the integration of H&S into design projects at early stages, contractors are more conscious of their crucial role in educating and training their employees towards a safer work environment, and CDM co-ordinators – a role created by CDM 07 to replace planning supervisors under CDM 94 – manage and ensure H&S is undertaken in a good cooperative manner in construction projects.

Why change?

The need to reform the current regulations came primarily from the UK's obligation as an EU-member state to update the current under-implemented TMCS (temporary and mobile construction sites) Directive for domestic clients. On the agenda for revision was targeting smaller projects, designers and contractors, as well as the need to reduce bureaucracy from the current regulations.

CDM 15

From April this year, all domestic clients have legally become 'duty holders'. The main concern here are the duties of inexperienced domestic clients being passed on by default to other duty holders, including the 'Principal Designer' – a new role created under the new CDM 15 Regulations.

The removal of the CDM-coordinator in exchange for the new role of Principal Designer has raised mixed feelings so far. The reality is that the HSE has outlined a very open brief for a construction H&S professional adviser that can carry design responsibilities. Many large architectural practices have come forward affirming they would embrace it with appended liabilities. By contrast, smaller practices, which have much more at stake, are actively refusing the liability under the advice, or even-withholding their PI insurances.

The purpose of the HSE in implementing the Principal Designer role is to target the reoccurring issue under the existing regulations of the late appointment of CDM Co-ordinators. The intention is to shift the existing role to a more active party, who can integrate H&S concepts at the early design stages, while also performing design work. Over the years, and particularly with the growth of design-and-build contracts, architects have become more removed from the construction process. If they are to play a key role in the delivery of H&S on construction projects, it is important to overcome on-site inexperience. CDM 15 provides an opportunity for architects to develop their role as fully-equipped designers who can undertake projects with an integrated approach that is subsequently carried on safely throughout the construction process.

Whether large or small, or working with corporate or domestic clients, architectural practices should be pre-cautious by ensuring clients are always informed of their legal duties. If the role of Principal Designer is not willingly undertaken, architects should always make sure that the client formally appoints a person or organisation to carry out the role – bearing in mind whoever is appointed should also carry some design responsibilities.