



**SUPPLY CHAIN SAFETY  
LEADERSHIP GROUP**

**Highways Safety Hub  
Raising the Bar 29  
Supervision**

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## Objective

This Raising the Bar guidance document provides practical guidance on how to comply with the Supply Chain Safety Leadership Council Common Intent Document on Supervision as well as aiming to provide clear guidance on the expected level and minimum competency requirements of all levels of supply chain supervision on all National Highways Construction and Maintenance Activities.

## Scope

The expectation is that this Raising the Bar Guidance Document will apply to all supply chain partners working with National Highways.

For the purpose of this guidance a supervisor is someone defined as “Those persons directly supervising construction related work activities on National Highways sites. They are the front-line supervisors with direct responsibility for putting people to work and who will typically brief their workers on how to carry out their work and ensure that they are carrying out their work safely through on site monitoring”

## Background

A number of research papers conducted on behalf of the HSE have found evidence that suggests poor supervision is a significant organisational factor that can contribute to accidents. Problems can emerge because of poorly defined responsibilities, inadequate resources, poor supervisory conduct and behaviour, heavy workloads or as a result of removing supervisory roles altogether.

Recent investigations into incidents within construction and maintenance activities of National Highways have highlighted a deficiency in the current expected ratios and competency levels of supervisors within our supply chain. Further investigations have identified an inconsistent approach between different suppliers in both minimum levels of supervision and minimum standards of competency.

This issue was originally highlighted in National Highways 5 Year Health and Safety Plan and more recently by the Supply Chain Safety Leadership Group as a particular concern as it reduces the opportunities to recognise and respond to unsafe practices. Inadequate supervision in the workplace is a management system failure. Therefore, effective levels of supervision must be a key part of an organisation’s safety management system.

## Governance Requirements

There is a clear expectation within the Supply Chain Safety Leadership Group Common Intent Document on Supervision to raise and create the following approach as a minimum and common standard of supervision.

## Minimum Requirements

The following elements are mandatory requirements and suppliers shall ensure these elements are applied fully on National Highways sites.

Skills required	Supervisor Level 1.	Supervisor Level 2.	Supervisor Level 3.
<b>Health Safety Qualification</b>	NH Passport + role-based competence card	SSSTS or equivalent + NH Passport + role-based competence card	SMSTS or equivalent + NH Passport + role-based competence card
<b>Safety systems</b>	Competent	Expert	Expert
<b>Communication skills</b>	Competent	Competent	Expert
<b>Briefing quality</b>	Competent	Competent	Competent
<b>Risk awareness</b>	Competent	Expert	Expert
<b>Quality and delivery</b>	Competent	Expert	Expert
<b>Sustainability and environment</b>	Competent	Competent	Competent
<b>Inclusive leadership</b>	Competent	Competent	Competent
<b>Incident Management</b>	Competent	Competent	Competent

Where the requirements of Expert, Competent and aware are defined as:

**Aware** – has some knowledge on the topic.

**Competent** – has knowledge on a given topic and is able to implement that knowledge as part of their normal duties.

**Expert** – has extended knowledge on a topic and is able to train or communicate the knowledge to others.

## Guidance – Applying the Hierarchy of Controls

### Overview

**The following guidance is written with the expectation that it represents best practice and as such should normally be followed unless a better local solution has been devised to meet the overall objective.**

### 1. Organisational Expectation

All organisations working for or on behalf of National Highways should ensure the right supervisors have been selected for the right job and ensure the relevant individuals have:

- › The necessary qualification, competency and soft skills for supervisory activities
- › An understanding of hazards and control measures for the task, and wider project
- › The experience and demonstrated ability to lead teams.
- › An understanding of behavioural issues, leadership and effective intervention skills
- › The necessary attitude to ensure the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of their team remains their highest priority.

The requirement to provide adequate resources is a key management function.

By providing an adequate and appropriate level of supervision for workers an organisation must ensure:

- › They support/Mentor supervisors in discharging their roles and responsibilities.
- › Give them achievable targets.
- › Support them in conflict resolution.
- › Ensure supervisors have the time and the opportunity to interact with others to fulfil all their supervisory responsibilities.
- › Provide additional training to supervisors where necessary in the specific hazards of your processes and how you expect the risks to be controlled.
- › Measure, audit and review all aspects of the work activities to determine the effectiveness of supervision.

### Role of Supervision

A supervisor has a particularly important part to play as a front-line decision maker and as part of the management team. The right supervisors who demonstrate the correct behaviours can have a significant, positive impact on the workforce and play an important role in maintaining a safe site.

Supervision and supervisory roles typically involve:

- › Having a clear understanding of health and safety requirements and risk as it applies to the tasks being carried out.
- › Understanding the systems and processes required to ensure that the tasks are carried out correctly.
- › Maintaining and suggesting improvements to procedures for continual improvement.
- › Understanding overall team workload to plan and allocate day-to-day work and appropriate level of manpower of the team for which they are responsible.
- › Monitoring work patterns/shift rotas and fatigue.
- › Briefing, coaching, encouragement and development of individual workers.
- › Using effective two-way communication within the team.
- › Problem solving/decision making.
- › Monitor the effectiveness of training.
- › Ensure the workforce have the necessary capacity and competence to do the job.
- › Measuring team performance.

- › Promoting and influencing positive culture.
- › Providing an appropriate immediate response to an incident.
- › Monitoring safety performance and compliance ensuring a just culture approach in a friendly but firm manner.
- › Being aware of the physical and mental wellbeing of the people working under them.
- › Challenging unsafe practices and poor behaviour, stopping work activity where necessary.
- › Providing leadership in normal and abnormal situations such as emergency situations.
- › Ensures and promotes workforce involvement.
- › Reviewing how well tasks have been completed and implementing lessons learnt.
- › Provide coordination between contractors.
- › An understanding of the commercial aspects of the work being carried out.

Overall National Highways expects all persons with supervisory responsibilities to lead by example and set the standards for workers to follow, to raise awareness and improve the Health and Safety Culture on site.

### Management Structure

Whilst the majority of supervisor responsibility falls to the front-line supervisors it is worth remembering that supervisory functions may be shared between numbers of front-line managers, or between lead individuals in a self-managed team in a hierarchy structure known as the span of control. A hierarchical style of company leadership is encouraged within an organisation management structure. A typical hierarchy style within National Highways' supply chain is as follows;

## Level 1

- A person who works within one team /gang directly controlling a small operation step by step – foreman, chargehand, ganger, or junior supervisor

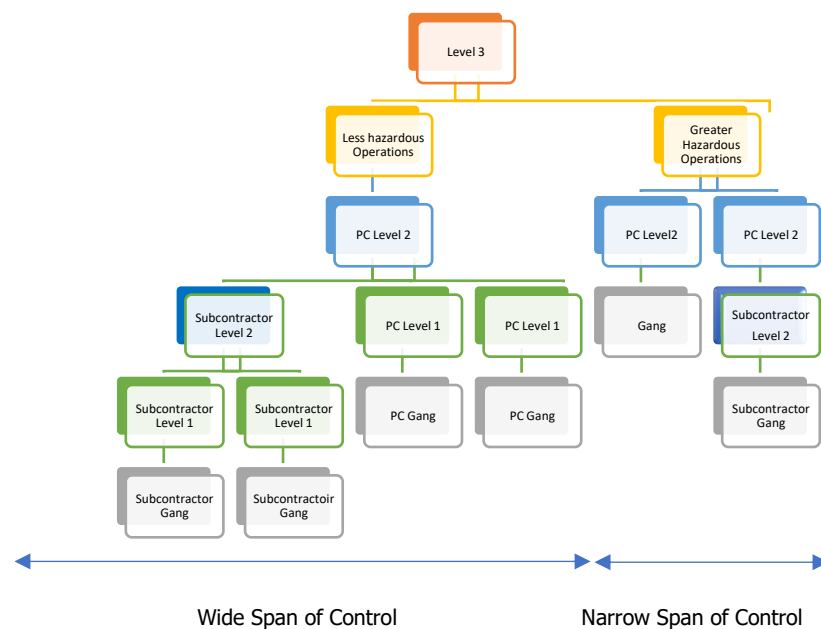
## Level 2

- A person who oversees the work of a larger team or more than one team and whose role encompasses a degree of coordination and management on a medium sized site, including specialist sub-contractor supervisor.

## Level 3

- A person who oversees a project or a section of a large project and has responsibility for planning the work in that section. The controlling mind on a large complex shift involving multi trades

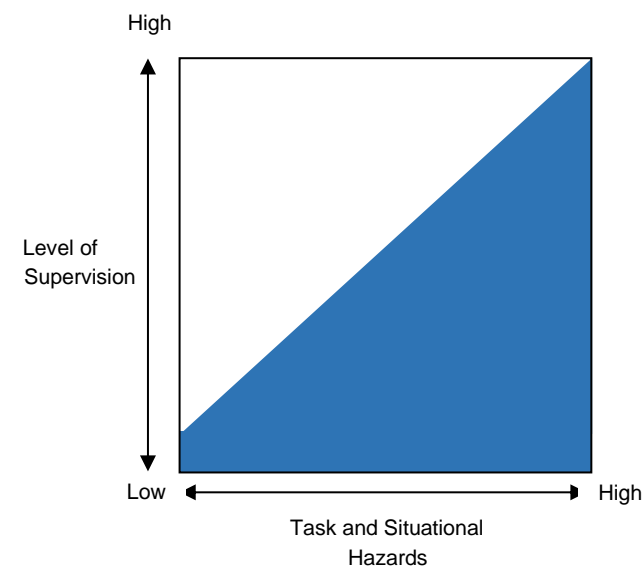
Depending on the activity being undertaken effective supervision should be reflected in the use of both non-working and working supervision. However, lead operatives (Level 1) in self-managed teams should only typically be used for low-medium activities. By their very nature activities that are more hazardous require a greater level of supervision than less hazardous activities and the level of onsite monitoring of non-working supervision should be increased accordingly making the span of control narrow as oppose to wide. An example of this is represented by the diagram below.



### Level of Supervision

CDM 2015 requires all contractors who employ workers or manage workers under their control (i.e. agency and subcontractor workers) to ensure that appropriate supervision is provided. Supervision is an essential part of monitoring safe working and conditions. The level of supervision provided should reflect the level of risk of the operation to be carried out, the environment in which the task is being undertaken and the skills, knowledge, training and experience of the workers concerned.

The chart below shows the more hazardous the task and situations then the higher the level of supervision required.



In deciding the appropriate levels of Management and Supervision the following may need to be considered

- › Types of Hazards and the associated level of risk
- › Number of work activities
- › Location and environment of work activities including distances and remoteness.
- › Number of people, plant, equipment and materials involved in each activity.
- › Other activities or people on site. E.g. visitors, members of the public, young people or trainees.
- › Duration of works, Time pressures, shift patterns

To ensure that the necessary precautions are taken; safety checks at each stage of the work activity may need to be taken and the supervisor should remain present whilst work activities are being undertaken. Even where

risks are low, some supervision will always be needed to make sure that standards are being maintained.

New, inexperienced, or young people, as well as those whose first language is not English, are also very likely to need more supervision than others. Workers will need to know how to raise concerns, so supervisors are familiar with the possible problems due to unfamiliarity, inexperience and communication difficulties

The start of any new task or the introduction of a new set of workers will initially need a greater degree of supervision. Once the Supervisor is confident that the work is being undertaken as planned and workers fully understand the risks the level of close supervision may be reduced through reassessment of the activity and recording any changes on a dynamic Risk Assessment or similar Document

To aid suppliers to consistently assess the level of Supervision required on National Highways sites an indicative Supervisory Ratio Decision Tool is provided in Appendix A.

### **Use of Subcontractors**

Principal Contractor Supervisors have an important part to play in managing and checking the work of contractors to ensure it is being done as agreed and to the required specification and standard. The Principal Contractor Supervisor should also be visible to provide coordination between other contractors as well as being the main focal point in the communication and issuing of project specific documents such as permits-to-work. The Principal Contractor Supervisor is there to also reinforce their commitment to health and safety so that 'stakeholders' are in no doubt about how important health and safety is to the organisation.

Where Principal Contractor engages in the services of 2nd and 3rd tier suppliers to National Highways then the Principal Contractor is required to adopt, promote and enforce the standard expected by themselves and National Highways. Regardless of whether the subcontractor provides their own supervisor to the required competency standard, National Highways expect that the Principal Contractor provides their own additional supervision for contractors and other third parties on site and make these arrangements clear to everyone, so they understand their roles and responsibilities.

Whilst National Highways expects the Principal Contractor to always have supervision present, the span of control can be widened once a clear trust and assurance is developed by long standing collaborative relationships. This confidence will initially be taken from undertaking the supervisor assessment requirement as set out in Raising the Bar 5 - Behavioural Based Safety.

## **2. Benchmark your current position.**

Benchmark your current position of supervision skills and improvement needs by conducting and documenting a yearly skill gaps analysis of existing supervisory populations to establish areas of focus. Each level of supervision will be assessed against a minimum criterion, the softer skills necessary to successfully interact with the modern working population will be given as much emphasis as traditional supervisory skills. During your interaction with your established workers, it is expected that you will discuss the potential of them becoming supervisors in the future, so the necessary decisions and investment can be made in preparing them for the role.

### **Supervisor Competence**

The level of knowledge and experience of a supervisor is of equal importance to the competency level of the team undertaking the work activity. Effective supervisors are those who have the skills, knowledge, training, experience, and leadership qualities to suit the job in hand. Good communication and people management skills are also important qualities for supervisors. National Highways acknowledges that the degree of knowledge, skill and experience will vary regarding nonworking supervision for different types of roles and activities. To aid consistency and promote continuous development across our supply chain, National Highways have developed a suite of Role Specific Supervisor Profiles as part of the Passport Competency Management System. These profiles will also span across three levels which are, Trainee Supervisor, Supervisor and Senior Supervisor. The reason for this is National Highways also acknowledge that the level of hazard and risk of any activity should be reflected in the overall competence and experience of the supervisor. Therefore, activities

that pose a higher risk must only be supervised by experienced Senior Supervisors.

Whilst each profile will be tailored to the needs of each role undertaken on National Highways Road Network, there are many generic constants that will be included which are

- › A role-based qualification such as NVQ/NHSS/ILM etc (Competence card).
- › For level 2 and above, hold a supervisor level CSCS card.
- › Have the sufficient experience, on the job knowledge and skill in the activity being supervised.

Once assessed, each contract / project must formally appoint the supervisor to that position in writing. The appoint letter should define their roles and responsibilities which must be communicated, understood, and accepted by the supervisor.

Supervisory staff must be inducted and competent in the application of expected standards and management procedures on the contract / project and must also be easily identifiable to all on site. This will usually be using a black safety helmet but could also be by the use of a photographic skills board.

Skills required	Supervisor Level 1.	Supervisor Level 2.	Supervisor Level 3.
<b>Health Safety Qualification</b>	NH Passport + role-based competence card	SSSTS or equivalent + NH Passport + role-based competence card	SMSTS or equivalent + NH Passport + role-based competence card
<b>Safety systems</b>	Competent	Expert	Expert
<b>Communication skills</b>	Competent	Competent	Expert
<b>Briefing quality</b>	Competent	Competent	Competent
<b>Risk awareness</b>	Competent	Expert	Expert
<b>Quality and delivery</b>	Competent	Expert	Expert
<b>Sustainability and environment</b>	Competent	Competent	Competent
<b>Inclusive leadership</b>	Competent	Competent	Competent
<b>Incident Management</b>	Competent	Competent	Competent
<b>Planning skills</b>	Aware	Competent	Expert
<b>Mentorship of team</b>	Aware	Competent	Competent
<b>Commercial awareness</b>	Aware	Competent	Expert

<b>Mental wellbeing</b>	Aware	Aware	Aware
<b>Manage team performance</b>	Aware	Competent	Expert
<b>Reporting systems</b>	Aware	Aware	Aware
<b>Developing self and others</b>	Aware	Aware	Competent
<b>Customer and stakeholder relations</b>	Aware	Aware	Competent
<b>Behavioural Awareness</b>	Aware	Competent	Competent

Skills shown in red are the core minimum skills that all competent supervisors are required to meet.

### 3. Develop your organisations knowledge.

You will be expected to demonstrate training solutions that align with the goals outlined in this document.

### 4. Provide ongoing support

You will provide ongoing support for your supervisors, by addressing the areas of improvement identified in the skills gap analysis, it is expected that you will continually upskill your supervisors through training or mentorship. You will allow the time needed for training and mentorship, by releasing people from their normal duties for a period sufficient to address the needs identified.

### 5. Review and Evolve

Review and Evolve your supervisory strength and develop a succession pipeline of suitable candidates for future posts. You will use the Maturity Framework (example below) to measure your position, track your progression, and create a continuous improvement culture within your organisation.



Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert	Leader
Level of supervisions within organisation has been identified.	Level of supervisions within organisation has been identified.	Evidence that skill gaps are addressed, and agreed development plans are completed within 12 months	Training and development solutions are available for Expert skill level.	Cross sector movement and/or development is evident.
Methods to assess capability and skill gaps are in place to understand benchmark.	Methods to assess capability and skill gaps are in place to understand benchmark.	Minimum competency is achieved by, or plan in place to complete training by 100% of population.	Proactive development of targeted individuals to perform at next level.	Training and development solutions shared as best practice across the industry
Training and development solutions are available for Competent level in the core minimum skills (8)	Training and development solutions are available for Competent level in the core minimum skills (8)	360 review process in place to assess level of skill/capability.	Active succession pipelines in place with development plans in place	
		Training and development solutions are available for Awareness and Competent level in all skills (15)	Supervisors are proactive and drive continuous improvement in self and others.	

## Audit and Monitoring

National Highways will monitor compliance against the minimum expectations of this Raising the Bar guidance document through the Project Management and Independent Health and Safety Inspection processes.

## References

## Appendix 1: Supervisor Ratio Decision Tool

