

The RAMS Pre-Purchase Checklist

Fifteen questions to ask before you pay for RAMS,
and the answers that should worry you.

Why this exists

RAMS get bought under time pressure, often the week before a job starts, and the cheapest, fastest option can look identical to a proper one until something goes wrong on site. A generic template with your company name dropped in reads fine on the page and means nothing the day an HSE inspector or a principal contractor's site manager actually asks about it.

This is the list SML uses internally before agreeing to write for a new client, and it works just as well pointed the other way, at whoever you are about to pay. Take it to any provider, including SML, and ask the questions straight.

Fifteen questions to ask

- 1. ■ Has anyone from the company actually asked about your site, your plant, or your sequence of works?**

A RAMS written without a conversation is a template. It cannot reference your access route, your welfare arrangements or your specific plant because nobody asked.

- 2. ■ Will the document name your actual equipment, or does it say "suitable plant" and similar placeholders?**

Vague plant descriptions are the clearest sign of a reused template. A genuine RAMS names the excavator, the rig, the access platform, by make and type.

- 3. ■ Does it cover the specific hazards of this job, or the generic hazards of the trade?**

Groundworks near a live gas main and groundworks on an open field carry different risks. A generic trade template treats them the same.

- 4. ■ Is there a named author, and do they have site experience in this type of work?**

A method statement written by someone who has never stood on the type of site it describes tends to miss the risks that only show up in practice.

- 5. ■ Does the price include a construction phase plan, or is that a separate cost you will need later?**

RAMS without a phase plan is only half the CDM picture on a notifiable project. Ask what is actually included before comparing price.

- 6. ■ What is the turnaround time, and is that written down or just promised?**

A verbal promise of "a couple of days" with no confirmation in writing is the first thing that slips when the provider gets busy.

- 7. ■ Can the document be amended if site conditions change mid job, and is there a cost for that?**

Sites change. A RAMS that cannot be revised without a full rewrite and a new invoice is not built for real conditions.

- 8. ■ Does it separate out COSHH assessments, or bury hazardous substances inside the general method statement?**

COSHH needs its own assessment under the COSHH Regulations 2002. Folding it into general RAMS text is a common shortcut that will not hold up to scrutiny.

- 9. ■ Is Principal Designer or CDM advice available from the same provider, or only RAMS in isolation?**

RAMS sits inside a wider CDM 2015 framework. A provider who only does RAMS cannot tell you if the wider paperwork, F10, pre-construction information, is missing.

- 10. ■ Will you receive a version number and a date, so you can prove which version was on site on a given day?**

Undated, unversioned documents are hard to defend after an incident, when proving what was actually briefed on the day matters most.

11. ■ Does the provider ask what the previous RAMS on this job type looked like, or offer to review one you already have?

A provider who never asks to see existing documentation is selling a product, not solving your actual gap.

12. ■ Is subcontractor RAMS reviewed and approved as part of the service, or only your own company's documents?

Most incidents involving subcontractors trace back to unreviewed or unapproved RAMS being worked to without anyone checking them first.

13. ■ Are defects and condition surveys offered separately, or does the RAMS provider only do documentation?

A provider who understands the building as well as the paperwork is better placed to write RAMS that reflect real site risk, not just regulatory boxes.

14. ■ What happens if the RAMS is challenged on site by an inspector or a principal contractor, is support included?

A cheap document with no aftercare leaves you defending someone else's paperwork alone, at the worst possible moment.

15. ■ Is the fee fixed and quoted in writing before work starts?

Open ended pricing on a compliance document is a way for a provider to charge more once you are already committed to using them.

Five red flags, on their own

- A price quoted before anyone asks a single question about the site.
- The word "template" or "pack" used to describe what you are buying.
- No named author, only a company name on the front page.
- Same day delivery promised for a first time, complex or high risk job.
- No mention of CDM, Principal Designer or a construction phase plan at any point in the conversation.

How SML answers these fifteen questions

Every RAMS SML writes starts with a conversation about the actual site, names the actual plant and sequence, carries a version number and date, and sits alongside a construction phase plan and Principal Designer support when the project is CDM notifiable. Subcontractor RAMS are reviewed as standard, not sold as an add on. Fixed fees, agreed in writing, with quotations back within two working days.

Twenty three years in construction sits behind every answer on this page, ten as a carpenter and thirteen years managing sites, which is why the questions above are the ones that actually matter on site rather than the ones that sound good in a sales conversation.

Not sure how your current RAMS would score?

Send SML a copy and get an honest answer,
no obligation, no sales pitch.

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