

Building
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Calls to redundancy advice line soar as SMEs struggle

A record number of calls were made last month to the National Federation of Builders for help with issues such as redundancy.

Figures released by the NFB showed that 396 calls were made to the body's employment advice line. In December 275 calls were made, and in January last year there were 186.

The statistics were released as the NFB announced its new "bid-to-win" advice line,

launched in response to mounting demands from small and medium-sized firms struggling to compete for work in the downturn.

Julia Evans, chief executive of the NFB, said: "Complex prequalification questionnaires and tendering procedures are a huge burden to smaller contractors who lack the time and resources that larger firms can devote to completing them. Pressure is

mounting on these businesses every day."

The new helpline will offer free expert advice to members preparing prequalification documents and tender responses.

Overall construction output fell 18% in the last quarter of 2008 compared with the same period the previous year, according to the most recent Office of National Statistics figures.