

Are contractor workers putting your plant safety at risk?

7 reasons why it happens and safety solutions to help manage the risk potential

While you can oversee the safety of your own workforce, it's harder to control outside contractors. Whether you hire them to help facilitate lean manufacturing, maintenance shutdown or plant remodel, this abbreviated safety audit checklist may give you ideas for improving workplace safety when contractors or subcontractors are on site.

7 reasons workplace safety can be compromised when working with contractors

1. Contractors aren't prequalified
2. Contractors aren't REqualified
3. EHS performance of contractors is poorly managed
4. Job description is missing details
5. Contractors aren't familiar with your safety rules
6. Contractors and subcontractors cut corners to meet deadlines
7. Language differences make it difficult to communicate safety information

Best practices to help manage risk potential

1. Prequalify contractors for the anticipated scope of work. Develop a "safety checklist" contractors must pass in order to be awarded the work. You can create a safer work site by avoiding contractors with high incident rates or whose workers are undertrained and underqualified
2. Reassess contractors annually regarding their previous safety performance and fulfillment of your contracts. Make sure certifications and training are up-to-date. Follow jobs up with post-work evaluations that include disciplinary actions if necessary.
3. Have a dedicated person to manage contractors. Quality of information and communication is one of the most cited reasons for accidents in outsourced situations. The contractor manager should focus on better task planning that covers all details—like if part of the job requires being on a ladder or scaffolding—and make everyone understands in their language. In addition, they would
 - Make sure contractors comply with all of your company's safety rules and regulations and all applicable federal and state laws
 - Spot check and tell the contractor's employees when they're doing something wrong and remind them of the safe way to do the work
 - Have authorization to stop work, to inspect progress of the work, or to receive reports
 - Attend contractor's safety meetings and invite contractors to sit in on your company's safety meeting



The workplace safety issues addressed here are the tip of the iceberg, but a great place to start your contractor safety action plan.