

## MANAGING CONTRACTOR WORK

By Mark Dano

Among the most delicate and dangerous work processes that safety professionals must manage is when contractors are hired to complete work during factory shutdowns or on a routine schedule. This article shares a series of best practices and tips to guide safety professionals in managing contractors on their jobsites.

**Effectively managing** contractor work requires a proactive approach that prioritizes safety from the start. While past experiences—both positive and negative—can offer valuable lessons, following a structured plan ensures consistency and reduces risks.

### Safety Orientation for New Hires & Contractors

One reason contractor work is so dangerous is that they often have little or no experience working in your facility. As relative outsiders and without going through your company's hiring process, it is essential to have a documented comprehensive safety orientation that contractors must complete before beginning any work. This new hire or contractor safety orientation is valuable for several reasons:

- It familiarizes contractors with the company's specific safety policies and protocols such as emergency procedures, steps for reporting hazards and PPE use.

- It provides risk awareness and hazard identification to educate contractors about the hazards and risks specific to their job roles.

- It reinforces the organization's commitment to safety by emphasizing the importance of safe work practices and employee well-being.

- It helps ensure compliance with workplace safety regulations.

- It equips contractors with the knowledge and skills needed to work safely and minimize incidents.

- It clarifies expectations about safety responsibilities and expected behavior.

A well-executed and thorough safety orientation raises individual safety awareness and contributes to overall organizational effectiveness and productivity. It lays a foundation for a safe and productive work environment at the beginning of an individual's employment or contract assignment.

### JSA Review

Contractors should be expected to complete a job safety analysis (JSA) before completing any work at your facility or jobsite. JSAs should be reviewed by a safety professional to ensure their accuracy, value and thoroughness. A valuable JSA should include:

- job steps: a detailed breakdown of each task or step involved in completing a job,

- hazards identification: potential hazards associated with each job step,

- risk assessment: evaluation of the risks and severity of identified hazards,

- control measures: strategies to mitigate or eliminate identified hazards,

- safe work practices: procedures for safely performing each job step,

- PPE: requirements for protective gear necessary to perform the job safely,

- training requirements: any specific training or qualifications required to perform the job safely,

- emergency procedures: process to follow in a job-related emergency,

- review and sign-off: review and approval of the JSA by everyone who will be completing this work, including workers and supervisors, and

- documentation of the JSA process and any changes or updates made.

A well-prepared JSA helps ensure that tasks are performed safely and reduces workplace incidents, promoting an overall safer work environment.

### Daily Coordination Meetings & Site Map

During busy periods or large projects involving many different contractors, having a daily coordination meeting, sometimes called a daily stand-up, is valuable. During such meetings, the safety professional leading the meeting can highlight any trends that are being noticed throughout the day and can clarify working expectations. This meeting also provides a way for all contractors to communicate the timing and locations where they will be working during that day. This allows for proper planning to eliminate multiple contractors working in the same area simultaneously. One helpful tactic is to provide a site map and sticky notes to visually represent each contractor to show where they will be working that day.

Daily coordination meetings help everyone working at the facility or jobsite for several reasons. They provide an opportunity for team members to synchronize their activities and ensure that everyone is aligned on the project goals and tasks, helping to maintain focus on priorities. They also facilitate open communication among team members and promote transparency about progress and any challenges that arise. Holding daily meetings also provides a platform for contractors to promptly identify and address issues and helps to reinforce accountability. Finally, it can help teams adapt quickly to changes and discuss any adjustments that may be needed.

### Zero-Tolerance Policies

During any work with a contractor, it is important to establish a zero-tolerance policy for certain activities. A zero-tolerance policy refers to a strict enforcement approach where certain behaviors or actions are completely unacceptable under any circumstances. For example, during a shutdown involving contractor

## TIPS FOR MANAGING CONTRACTORS

### •Conduct a safety orientation.

Ensure that all contractors complete a safety orientation to familiarize them with site-specific policies, hazards and expectations.

- Review JSAs.** Require contractors to submit a JSA before work begins.

- Hold daily coordination meetings.** Conduct daily stand-ups to align contractors on tasks, communicate safety trends, and prevent worksite conflicts using a site map.

- Implement zero-tolerance policies.** Define and enforce strict safety rules with immediate consequences for violations.

- Maintain an active field presence.** Safety professionals should observe work firsthand to understand work processes, identify risks and engage with workers to foster a proactive safety culture.

- Delegate safety responsibilities.** Distribute safety tasks among project managers and contractor personnel to enhance efficiency.

work, an organization may strictly enforce a zero-tolerance policy for lockout/tagout where a 100% compliance policy prohibits any live electrical work, requiring fall protection whenever working at heights of 4 ft or higher, or requiring barricade tape areas to be labeled with company and point of contact information.

A zero-tolerance policy should:

- explicitly define what behaviors or actions are prohibited and will not be tolerated
- be consistently and uniformly applied to all individuals regardless of rank or status
- have immediate consequences for violations
- not allow for discretion or leniency when enforcing the policy
- be clearly communicated to all stakeholders to ensure that everyone understands the policy and its consequences

While zero-tolerance policies are intended to promote safe and compliant work environments, organizations may want to balance the need for clear boundaries with the ability to consider context and specific mitigating factors in some cases.

### Active Presence in the Field

To be effective as a safety manager, it is important to have boots on the ground and observe all the work that is going on at a facility or jobsite. This does not mean patrolling the area to seek out violations. An active presence in the field allows safety professionals to contribute to a proactive safety culture to help prevent incidents and foster collaboration across all organizational levels. Maintaining an active presence in the field is crucial for safety professionals for several reasons:

- Being present allows safety professionals to observe work activities firsthand, assess risks and identify potential hazards in real time. Direct observation provides more accurate insights than relying solely on reports or secondhand information.
- It fosters risk prevention and mitigation. By being on-site, safety professionals can implement immediate corrective actions and reinforce safe work practices.
- It helps safety professionals build essential relationships with frontline workers, supervisors and managers. Face-to-face interactions demonstrate commitment to safety and encourage suggestions and open communication about safety concerns.



The more people who buy in to the importance of safety during contractor work, the more likely the work will be completed safely.

- It helps them understand the intricacies of work processes to then tailor safety programs and policies to workers' and contractors' specific needs and challenges.

- It creates an opportunity to provide hands-on training, coaching and guidance to workers.

- It ensures familiarity with the physical layout of the site and operational procedures to be better prepared for emergencies.

- Visible presence in the field enhances safety professionals' credibility and influence. It reinforces their role as trusted advisors and advocates for safety within the organization.

Maintaining an active presence in the field is about more than monitoring compliance; it is also about actively contributing to a proactive safety culture, preventing incidents and fostering collaboration across the organization.

### Delegating to Colleagues

During any large-scale contractor work, a single safety professional may struggle to manage all of the work. It is important to identify colleagues, project managers and contractor personnel to partner with and receive support from. The more people who buy in to the importance of safety during contractor work, the more likely the work will be

completed safely. Delegating to colleagues is crucial during a large project for several reasons:

- Large projects typically involve a multitude of tasks and responsibilities. Distributing the workload among team members according to their skills, expertise and availability ensures that tasks are completed more efficiently and within deadlines.

- Delegating tasks based on people's individual skills and expertise can create innovative solutions.

- When other stakeholders handle some of the day-to-day tasks, it can free up the safety professional's time to focus on strategic planning, decision-making and overseeing the project.

- Involving multiple team members in different aspects of the project reduces the risk of single points of failure.

- Delegation encourages collaboration and promotes knowledge sharing among team members as they work together on interrelated tasks.

Effective delegation is not just about assigning tasks but strategically leveraging the strengths of team members to improve project performance and foster teamwork.

### Conclusion

Managing contractors can present many challenges for safety professionals. Conducting a safety orientation, completing JSA reviews, hosting a daily coordination meeting while the work is active, implementing zero-tolerance policies, maintaining an active presence in the field, and delegating as needed to colleagues can help set safety professionals on the path to successfully and safely managing contractor work on a jobsite. A few great first steps to get started in this process are to identify the zero-tolerance policies for your work environment, then use these policies to help guide the creation of your new hire and contractor safety orientation. **PSJ**

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