



BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

Subcontractor Selection & Control

Whether you're a site contractor who only hires a sub or two each year or a general contractor who hires hundreds of subcontractors annually, including subcontractor selection and control throughout the length of a project goes a long way toward the success of a project.

Subcontractors that can't meet project demands can cause major headaches on a project. Scheduling problems, quality issues, and manpower difficulties can shut a job down, which costs everyone on the project to lose time and money. In addition, poor safety performance can result in major and costly delays, fines and potential law suits. The costs of an unsafe work site are too high to ignore the practices of your subcontractors.

Subcontractors or, more often, the injured workers of subcontractors, end up filing third party liability claims. These almost always result in general liability claims being made against the higher tier contractors for causing or failing to properly control accidents on a project. These are among the most common and costly type of liability claims filed by contractors. Additionally, OSHA has become more active in levying fines to higher tier contractors where they are deemed to have controlling employer status over subcontractors.

Prequalifying

Although the subcontractor with the lowest bid looks good to the pocketbook, more often than not, you "get what you pay for". While cost is always a major concern, a financially strong and safe subcontractor will always perform better.

Formally prequalifying the safety experience, safety programs, and safety results of subcontractors interested in bidding on a project can alert prospective bidders to the fact that you are concerned about job site safety and are committed to working with only those contractors who share that commitment.

The following is a suggested list of items to review when prequalifying your subcontractors:

- Subcontractor's Experience Modification Rate (EMR) for the three most recent years.
- Data from last year's OSHA 300 Log
- The subcontractor's OSHA citation history
- A review of the subcontractor's safety program

Awarding the Contract

Your subcontract agreement should include insurance requirements and an indemnification clause to protect you, the higher tier contractor, from injury or damages arising out of the work of your subcontractor. You will also want to establish a method of attaining and reviewing Certificates of Insurance, including renewals.

Subcontractors should not be allowed to start work on a project until the subcontract agreement has been fully executed. You will also want to establish a method for notifying on-site supervisors of the status of subcontract agreements for subs on their project.

Project Orientation & Monitoring

Once a subcontractor has been qualified and is selected, the key to controlling them on the project is to gain their cooperation from the first day of the job. They must realize that safety will be a value throughout the project. Make it clear that unsafe acts or conditions or a failure to participate in safety-related activities will not be tolerated. If you do not enforce your own requirements or if safety issues are overlooked, subcontractors may become complacent and your headaches will be big.

Before the start of work on a project, a safety orientation for all subcontractors working on site is a must. This is a good time to discuss requirements for attendance at project safety meetings, reporting of accidents and/or other safety issues.

The on-going monitoring of your subcontractor's safety performance is critical to the safety outcome of the projects. A typical on-site subcontractor monitoring checklist could include:

- Receipt and review of training documentation for new employees, toolbox talks, equipment use, etc.
- Notification of all subcontractor accidents and receipt and review of associated accident reports
- Follow-up on corrective actions recommended as a result of job site inspections and/or accident investigations

Utilizing subcontractor selection and control best practices often results in a cleaner, more efficient project absent of scheduling problems, accidents, unwanted OSHA inspections, and material and manpower delays.



Monthly Toolbox Talk

Power Tools

Because power tools are so common in construction, workers are constantly exposed to a variety of hazards. The very tool that makes their job easy and efficient may one day be the cause of a tragic accident. It is good to be reminded of common-sense safety practices.

Power Tool Safety Tips

- Never carry a tool by the cord.
- Never yank the cord to disconnect it from the receptacle.
- Keep cords away from heat, oil, and sharp edges (including the cutting surface of a power saw or drill).
- Disconnect tools when not in use, before servicing, and when changing accessories such as blades, bits, etc.
- Avoid accidental starting. Do not hold fingers on the switch button while carrying a plugged-in tool.
- Use gloves and appropriate safety footwear when using electric tools.
- Store electric tools in a dry place when not in use.
- Do not use electric tools in damp or wet locations unless they are approved for that purpose.
- Keep work areas well lighted when operating electric tools.
- Ensure that cords from electric tools do not present a tripping hazard.
- Remove all damaged portable electric tools from use and tag them: "Do Not Use."
- Use Double-Insulated Tools.

Double-Insulated Tools:

- Hand-held tools manufactured with non-metallic cases are called double-insulated. If approved, they do not require grounding under the National Electrical Code.
- Such tools are often used in areas where there is considerable moisture or wetness. Although the user is insulated from the electrical wiring components, water can still enter the tool's housing. Ordinary water is a conductor of electricity. If water contacts the energized parts inside the housing, it provides a path to the outside, bypassing the double insulation. When a person holding a hand tool under these conditions contacts another conductive surface, an electric shock occurs.
- If a power tool, even when double-insulated, is dropped into water, the employee should resist the initial human response to grab for the equipment without first disconnecting the power source.

Portable Tool Use with Extension Cords:

- Another potential hazard is using extension cords with portable tools. In construction, these cords suffer a lot of wear and tear. Often, the damage is only to the insulation, exposing energized conductors. When a person handling the damaged cord contacts the exposed wires while holding a metal tool case or contacting a conductive surface, serious electrical shock can result, causing a fall, physical injury, or death.
- Since neither insulation nor grounding protects you from these conditions, use other protective measures, such as a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).



Employee Recommendations:

HOW THIS TOPIC APPLIES TO THIS JOB:

ATTENDEES: Print Name / Signature (use back if necessary)

DATE: _____

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE: _____

JOB SITE / PROJECT: _____

