

CONTRACTOR SAFETY

Contractors doing work for your operation, whether on your property or on the road, should be held to the same safety standards expected of your own employees. Contractors on site might include: construction workers installing equipment; owner-operator truck drivers; plumbers; electricians; maintenance personnel; carpenters; and service personnel dealing with areas ranging from fire extinguishers to pest control.

Know who your contractors are. Know where they are and what they're doing. Know how many are on site so they can be notified and evacuated in case of an emergency like a fire or taken to shelter in the event of a tornado. Who's responsible in your Emergency Action Plan for handling contractors on site? What if that person's not around? Is there a backup?

Make sure your contractors are using the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment. If someone sees a non-compliance issue, whom should they contact? What sort of safety record does your contractor have? Are insurance requirements met? Empower your workers to alert you when safety violations are observed.

Communicate the hazards of your operation to your contractors before they begin work, especially if this is their first time on site or if processes have changed since they were last here. It's a good idea to meet with your contractors face to face and document your meeting. It's also a good message to your own workers that there is no double standard when it comes to safety.

Don't loan tools or equipment to your contractors. They should provide their own.

Do you have more than one contractor on site? Do they understand how to keep out of each other's way?

Leased or temporary employees are one specific group of contractors that bears special attention. Know your contract with your agency providing these workers. Who is responsible for their supervision: you, or the agency? Do they have a supervisor from the agency on site?

One final word of caution: Beware the "independent contractor". Not that there's anything wrong with independent contractors; it's just that some people who call themselves "independent contractors" are in fact nominally qualified individuals working for cash with no insurance and no contract. Asking to see a Certificate of Insurance is a good place to start to find the real independent contractors.

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For comments or suggestions about *For Your Safety*, e-mail joebateman@isri.org

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