

SAFETY

Safety is no accident.

- Anonymous



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According to the U.S. Department of Labor, worker carelessness and neglect of good safety practices cause 80% of job site injuries. Few problems can affect your project more adversely than the death or injury of one of the crew members or a neighbor's child. Encouraging an interest in safety may be the **most important** of your Project Management responsibilities.

You (or the General Contractor) should have Course of Construction Insurance covering your building site and accidents which may occur. You'll want insurance coverage against loss due to theft, vandalism, and fire on your residence. Coverage should also be provided for personal injury of yourself and others. Each Trade Contractor, besides showing evidence of license and bond, will provide proof of Builder's Liability Insurance for the project and Worker's Compensation for their employees to cover their risk while working on your project.

In 1970, Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act "*...to assure so far as possible every working man and woman in the nation safe and healthful working conditions and to preserve our human resources.*" The agency with primary responsibility for worker safety was created in the Department of Labor and is called the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In each State, a similar governmental agency is mandated with responsibility for worker safety. What's important to note is that these Federal and State agencies have **developed and published standards** for safe and healthy working conditions, and it is your responsibility to be familiar with these standards.

The following checklist is a general guideline. A more comprehensive guide is available from your State's Department of Labor and Industries and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration which outlines safety standards for construction work. Write or call for safety standards prior to construction. You should allow ample time to develop a **SAFETY PLAN** for the unique circumstances surrounding your project.

SAFETY CHECKLIST

- ___ Arrange for a portable toilet on site.
- ___ Provide adequate drinking water.
- ___ Safety rules communicated to each Trade Contractor.
- ___ Accessible first-aid kit available.
- ___ Certified first-aid personnel available on site.
- ___ Phone numbers for police, ambulance, and fire station.
- ___ Temporary electrical service grounded.
- ___ All electrical tools grounded.
- ___ All electrical cords kept away from water.
- ___ Use listed, labeled, or certified equipment in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- ___ Warning and danger signs posted in appropriate areas.
- ___ Hard hats and steel tipped shoes worn where needed.
- ___ Cap protruding steel rebar to eliminate hazard of impalement.
- ___ Careful ladder use.
- ___ Power tools with proper guards in place.
- ___ Protective gear available such as goggles, gloves, and respirators.
- ___ Always use protective goggles when flying fragments are possible.
- ___ Require wearing of personal protective equipment.
- ___ Set a good example as a safety minded individual.
- ___ Adequate slope on edges of all ditches and trenches over four feet deep.
- ___ Place excavated material at least two feet from edge of ditches and trenches.
- ___ Open holes and trenches fenced properly.
- ___ Open holes in sub-floor properly covered or protected.
- ___ Safe access for all types of scaffolds.
- ___ Guardrails provided for open-sided floors or platforms.
- ___ Workers on roof with proper equipment.
- ___ Stair rail system constructed on stair ways of four or more risers.
- ___ Excess and/or flammable scrap not left lying around.
- ___ General housekeeping must be on-going as the job progresses.
- ___ No nails sticking-out of boards or other materials.
- ___ Use approved containers or tanks for storing or handling flammable or

- combustible liquids.
- ___ Gas cans and other flammable liquids to remain in secure area.
- ___ Welding tanks shut off tightly when not in use. Stored secure in upright position.
- ___ Area where soldering work performed checked for smoldering or burning wood.
- ___ Proper clearance from all power lines.
- ___ Spread oily or paint rags outside to dry so they will not ignite.
- ___ Material Safety Data Sheet on site for hazardous chemicals.
- ___ Frequent, daily meetings are most effective.

Accidents are caused!

Accidents don't occur without reason. There are two reasons accidents happen: either workplace **conditions** are unsafe or workplace **actions** are unsafe.

Typical unsafe conditions:

- * Defective equipment and tools
- * Clutter from poor housekeeping
- * Exposure to hazardous substances
- * Poor layout of work and storage areas
- * Lack of proper protective clothing and gear

Typical unsafe actions:

- * Using the wrong equipment or tool
- * Rushing to complete task
- * Failure to observe warning labels
- * Following improper work procedures
- * Not wearing personal protective equipment

Together, ***unsafe conditions and unsafe actions create hazards***. Job hazards are most likely to cause a problem and the point is to identify each hazard and ***create actions to correct the problem***. The Owner (or General Contractor) is directly liable for safety hazards.

How can a **SAFETY PLAN** be implemented? Most important is the leadership you provide to the entire construction organization. This begins at your first meeting with a Trade Contractor to discuss your project and solicit a bid proposal. Mention your commitment to safety rules and procedures emphasizing their incorporation into site operations. As negotiations progress, include language in the "*Conditions*" portion of Contract Documents which stipulate compliance with federal, state, and local safety regulations. For each Trade Contractor there must be a clear assignment of responsibility to a designated field superintendent.

Next, post signs on your project indicating site hazards. "*Danger*" and "*Caution*" signs should only be placed in areas where an immediate or potential hazard exists. It does no good to plaster warnings around the site in a ridiculous manner. Also, post a sign adjacent to the phone on site listing emergency phone numbers such as a local physician, hospital, ambulance, fire department, and police station. Another important precaution is to collect a Material Safety Data Sheet for all hazardous substances being used on your project and start a **SAFETY FILE**. This is a ready reference when using materials with possible hazardous substance exposures.

Another procedure is to keep on site an approved first-aid kit which is accessible to all Trade Contractors. In addition, each Trade Contractor should provide their own first-aid kit. Ask each contractor if their field superintendent is trained and certified to offer first-aid. If not, suggest ways to make medical services immediately available should an injury occur.

For a **SAFETY PLAN** to be effective, the Owner and Trade Contractors must be committed to safety. This commitment is primarily attitudinal representing a set of values which recognize the worth of human life and endeavor. Posting slogans and phone numbers or paying lip service to the idea of safety does nothing to directly correct a problem. ***Safety must be integrated into the production of the house from the standpoint of methods, materials, and machines.*** Look for ways to improve the work environment by anticipating hazards on a daily basis.