

10 Foolproof Ways to Improve Jobsite Safety

Written by: John Lack, Construction Consultant, Acuity

YOUR QUICK GUIDE TO HEDGING AGAINST LOST WORKERS AND DIMINISHED PROFITS

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), 70 million days were lost due to injuries in 2021 alone. Considering wage losses, medical expenses, administrative expenses, and employer costs, NSC estimates the average cost per medically consulted injury in 2021 at \$42,000. Completing jobs on time and to standard requires a healthy workforce, which also leads to a healthy bottom line. The following 10 actions can help you create a safer business, improve jobsite safety, and mitigate on-the-job accidents.

1. ESTABLISH A SAFETY CULTURE.

Create a site safety plan that includes company policies, work practices, and potential job hazards. Common construction injuries to address include strains, cuts, and falls. It's also important to lead by example. By showing you're not above the safety standards, you establish that no one is exempt from the rules and that you are taking safety seriously.

2. CONDUCT SAFETY TRAINING.

Develop a mix of in-depth, off-the-job training, such as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-hour training and quicker, on-site "toolbox talks," or refresher safety briefings. If you find yourself thinking something is common sense or shouldn't need to be stated explicitly, you probably need to do a toolbox talk on it. Even if it has been explained



before, it may be time for a refresher. Your insurance company may have resources available to help with these trainings.

3. ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the suicide rate in construction – about 53 suicides per 100,000 workers – is the highest of all industries at almost four times the national average. Many construction workers may be afraid to ask for help or even acknowledge they have an issue at all. Working to reduce the stigma and providing a supportive workforce can create a safer place for your workers. Make mental health resources accessible to everyone on your team. OSHA has many resources available that are specifically tailored to the construction industry. If you are having a hard time, you are not alone. Remember that these resources are for you, too.

4. PROVIDE SAFETY ITEMS ON THE JOBSITE.

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) should be offered to employees and site visitors. Security fencing helps ensure the site is clearly labeled, allowing for controlled access to the premises. Clear and accurate signage should provide directions to specific areas and a list of materials required for entry. The list might include PPE like hard hats or helmets.

5. IMPLEMENT JOBSITE INSPECTIONS.

OSHA requires frequent and regular inspections of the jobsite. One way this can be accomplished is by a job-safety analysis (JSA). JSAs improve safety for your business, site, or facility. By identifying tasks, listing steps, analyzing threats, determining secure practices, and deciding if PPE should be used, you can develop a safe working environment.

6. COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEAM.

Open communication is necessary to create team camaraderie and an effective safety culture. This means considering employee opinions when finding solutions to problems. After showing them efficient ways to voice their concerns, you should also give employees the leverage to offer their ideas for a solution. Make sure your team knows how and when to reach you. One way to improve communication is to have quick morning safety meetings in which you go over the JSA for the day, as well as what was found during the site inspection. Investigate all incidents and keep your employees up-to-date on important or relevant issues and what you are doing about it. Listen to your workers when they describe near misses so they don't become injured or worse.

7. PREPARE FOR THE ELEMENTS.

Develop a weather plan. Spring often brings severe storms, rain, and lightning. Your site may need increased inspections for downed power lines or trees before work can begin. In the summer, contractors should be mindful of the heat as their equipment gets hotter. Hydration also plays a key role in worker safety. Summer usually means an increase in vehicle and foot traffic, as well as children's activities. Because of these increases, a construction site should be extra secure to ensure it cannot be easily accessed by the public.

Plan breaks in the daily schedule for your crew to hydrate and rest. If you are in an area with winter weather, ensure snow and

ice removal resources are available. While the winter season requires more equipment checks, contractor's equipment insurance can protect small tools, employees' tools, and other borrowed equipment, as insurance companies understand that without functioning equipment, your job would be impossible.

8. DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY PLAN.


An emergency can happen despite your best efforts. An emergency plan can help alleviate stress and confusion during such incidents. Like some of the other tips, an emergency plan comes back to communication. When everyone on the site is aware of and comfortable with the plan, they can act faster and with more accuracy if something goes wrong. Make sure employees know where the first-aid kits are, have important phone numbers available, and know the address of the site where they're working.

9. BE AWARE OF JOBSITE DISTRACTIONS.

Distractions can arise from chatting, talking on cellphones, listening to loud music, or a plethora of other common jobsite happenings. They can also come from loud equipment in adjacent areas or chemical smells traveling beyond the confines of the area where they're being applied. It's important to identify these distractions and mitigate where you can. Set expectations, not just for one area but for the entire site. For example, consider whether the jobsite is set up properly to contain chemical exposure or if additional workers need PPE, even if they're not working directly with the chemicals. Taking a holistic view of the jobsite can remove blind spots that may occur if you are focusing too narrowly on any one area.

10. BE PROACTIVE.

You can say safety is a priority, but if you cancel a safety meeting or ignore unsafe behavior to meet a deadline, your workers will notice. Do not ignore an unsafe situation; remember that actions speak louder than words. When employees experience support from management, it provides a sense of trust. It is better to proactively call out a problem than to deal with avoidable and unfortunate consequences.

To ensure your jobsite doesn't end up as a headline or a statistic, a hands-on emphasis on safety can increase employee engagement and decrease on-the-job incidents. 



About the Author

John Lack brings more than 35 years of office and field experience in the construction industry, including carpentry, welding, project management, contract negotiation, and much more, to [Acuity Insurance](#). As Acuity's construction consultant, Lack shares his experiences to help contractors protect and expand their businesses.

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