Contractor to Employee: Maintaining Standards Across Workforce Types Stats and Facts

FACTS

- **A Different Employment Type Does Not Mean a Different Safety Standard:** Whether a worker is permanent, temporary, or a contractor, the hazards on the job site are identical. The obligation to protect them is equally the same.
- **Contractors Arrive Unfamiliar:** A temporary worker who arrives without site-specific hazard information, emergency procedures, or equipment training is exposed to hazards they cannot yet recognize — on day one, when risk is highest.
- **Responsibility Is Shared — and Often Unclear:** When a contractor is injured on a host employer's site, both the staffing agency and the host employer may share legal responsibility. Gaps in accountability between the two are a documented cause of safety failures.
- **Training May Miss Contractors:** In multiemployer workplaces, safety programs often default to permanent staff. Contractors may miss lockout/tagout training, site-specific procedures, or emergency protocols that could save their lives.
- **Short Assignments Create High Risk:** Workers on brief assignments have the least time to learn the site, recognize equipment hazards, and build situational awareness — while facing pressure to perform quickly in an unfamiliar environment.
- **Inconsistent PPE Standards:** When host employers and staffing agencies have different PPE policies, temporary workers can arrive without the correct equipment — creating immediate and avoidable exposure.

STATS

- Workers’ compensation injury rates for temporary workers are approximately twice that of permanent workers, according to Washington State Department of Labor and Industries data.
- NIOSH researchers have found that temporary workers have a higher overall injury rate than permanent workers in the same occupations – temporary workers in plastics manufacturing have twice the injury rate of their permanent coworkers.
- In the petrochemical industry, temporary workers involved in maintenance and turnaround activities have higher injury rates than permanent employees, according to NIOSH research.
- OSHA can and does cite both host employers and staffing agencies for contract or temporary workers’ injuries and hazard exposures – regardless of which party provided the worker.
- In one documented OSHA case, a staffing agency employee in food manufacturing was fatally pulled into rotating machine parts while cleaning equipment. Permanent workers had all received lockout/tagout training – the temporary worker had not.