Don’t Contract Out Personal Safety

Working with some contractors’ employees can create challenges, not to mention anxiety and hazards. But with cooperation and understanding, job safety doesn’t have to be “hit or miss.”

Although the fundamentals of workplace safety are the same, you might observe that an employee from another company takes a different approach. For example, Jim was wiring an electrical panel for a contractor at a housing construction site. He did a couple of things differently but still managed to complete the job safely.

You can’t expect every employee to think and work the same, but everyone must play by the same rules.

There have been situations where host workers have observed a contractor’s employees engaged in unsafe acts. It’s important to remember that if one worker is taking risks, it affects everyone on the job. If you observe an unsafe act or condition, you should either talk to the worker responsible or report it to your supervisor. If you don’t, a serious injury or fatality could result, and you may never forgive yourself.

The key to working with another company’s employees is sharing the same commitment to safety and following the same rules. For example, both crews must understand proper lockout/tagout procedures and ensure that no one deviates from these protocols.

Do:

- Communicate your actions. If you are preparing to weld and another worker is moving flammable materials nearby, communicate the hazards.
- Ensure both crews are aware of any hazardous chemicals on site and that material safety data sheets are available and understood.
- Show a contractor’s employees where first aid stations are

located.
- Work together in identifying job hazards prior to every assignment.
- Keep the jobsite tidy by removing waste material that could pose tripping hazards.
- Watch over each other.

Don’t:

- Remove someone else’s lock or tag.
- Attempt to use equipment or machinery without authorization or training.
- Take shortcuts in procedures.

Use the buddy system

Missing from many safety programs today is the “buddy system.” Too often workers shake their heads while observing unsafe acts, but they don’t speak up for fear of offending the person. Make it a point to incorporate the buddy system into your own safety practices.

You can contract out a lot of things, but don’t contract out your personal safety.