Contractor & Sub-Safety: Integrating External Workers Safely Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

Bringing contractors and subcontractors onto a worksite adds new people, new routines and new risks. Even skilled workers may not know your site rules, hazard zones or equipment procedures, and small miscommunications can lead to serious incidents. When multiple companies share the same space, safety depends on everyone working with the same expectations. Clear coordination is what keeps projects moving and prevents injuries before they happen.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

The danger comes from contractors not knowing your site the way your team does. Even skilled workers can miss hazards, misunderstand routines or assume procedures are the same as at their previous job. When different groups work together without the same information, simple mistakes can turn into serious incidents.

Gaps in Communication

Contractors may enter restricted areas, approach equipment incorrectly or assume a task is safe when it is not. Your team may assume the contractor already knows your rules. These mixed expectations create real risks.

Where Contractors Are Most at Risk

- Entering hazard zones, they are unfamiliar with
- Working around equipment with different movement patterns
- Missing site-specific procedures or warnings
- Using tools differently than your crew expects
- Relying on habits from previous jobs

Different Safety Cultures

Every company has its own habits, shortcuts and comfort levels. If contractors come from a workplace with weaker controls or different priorities, their approach may not match your expectations. Without alignment, one unsafe action can put both their workers and yours at risk.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Keeping contractors safe starts with making sure everyone is working from the same playbook. Even experienced workers need clear direction when they step onto a site they do not know. Good coordination, simple communication and clear expectations prevent most problems before they happen.

Share the Information They Need to Work Safely

Before work begins, explain site hazards, traffic routes, PPE expectations and any lockout or equipment procedures. Contractors cannot avoid dangers they do not know exist, so giving them the full picture protects both your crew and theirs.

Maintain Strong, Consistent Communication

Check in often, confirm instructions and make sure contractors know who to report to. When new workers understand who to ask and how to speak up, they are far less likely to guess or make assumptions.

What to Do to Keep Contractors Aligned with Your Safety Rules

- Review job steps together before starting
- Walk contractors through hazard areas they may encounter
- Verify they are using the correct PPE for your site
- Confirm they understand equipment movement and traffic patterns
- Make sure permits, authorizations and isolations are in place
- Encourage questions instead of shortcuts

These simple actions keep everyone on the same page.

Monitor Work and Correct Hazards Early

Observe how contractors perform tasks and address issues quickly. A gentle correction early on prevents them from forming unsafe habits that put multiple workers at risk.

FINAL WORD

Contractors work safely when everyone follows the same expectations. Clear communication, shared procedures and early guidance prevent the small mistakes that lead to big incidents. Taking a moment to align new workers with your site’s rules protects your crew, their crew and the job.