

## Keep Your New Hires Safe!

Nationwide and here in New Mexico, key economic indicators show that the pace of construction may finally be picking up. The climb back to better times for our industry will certainly resemble an uphill marathon rather than a downhill sprint, but we'll take the good news, even if it develops slowly.

Contractors will be adding staff over the next few weeks, months and years and those that hire and train new workers wisely will keep their insurance rates in check by keeping their losses down. More importantly, they will also send their workers home safe and healthy each night.

Did you know that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reports that 40% of employees injured at work have been on the job less than one year. This is reflected in Builders Trust's claim data, which shows that newer employees account for a disproportionately large share of reported claims. Why are so many new employees getting injured? The answer is usually communication, training and supervision issues. Here are some common reasons for new hire injuries

- New hires are usually asked if they can do certain types of work, handle certain types of tools or operate certain types of equipment. Needing a job, the applicant responds affirmatively, that he/she can do all the tasks that will be required.
- Project managers, foremen and supervisors often assume new hires know much more than they actually do.
- New hires are less likely to ask questions, thus, they'll proceed with a task even if they are not sure the best and safest way to complete the task.
- Fellow, long-term employees may assume the new hire knows what he/she is doing, without even bothering to ask, adopting a "if the foreman hired him, he must be okay" attitude.
- Language barriers can lead to a misunderstanding between the new hire and the person doing the hiring.

To prevent new hires from becoming an injury statistic, contractors need to invest time up front to make sure the new hire is prepared for the tasks at hand. This is best handled in a new employee orientation. New employee orientation should cover much more than employment paperwork and an explanation of payday. New hires must be made aware of the employer's emphasis on safe work methods and their overall safety culture. The orientation should focus on the type of work done by your business. Examples may be:

- Personal Protective Equipment

- Proper Scaffolding and Ladder Use
- Falls, Trips & Slips Hazards
- Trenching/Excavation
- Working in Confined Spaces
- Weather Safety
- Material Handling

A safety-focused, new hire orientation is critical. Hands-on training in conjunction with a mentoring program that emphasizes, not only is the new employee responsible for their own safety, but also the safety of everyone on the job site. When considering a mentoring program, be sure to partner them with other seasoned employees before releasing them on their own. Also, consider giving them a special colored safety vest for an initial period of time and instruct all other employees to keep an eye out for the new hire.

By implementing a new hire orientation and mentoring program, it allows you as the employer to have a solid understanding of the new hires' abilities, and/or limitations, before they are set out on their own.

Remember, nothing is more important than the safety and well being of your employees and the goal for all contractors should be to send all employees home, at the end of each day, injury free.

If you would like help creating a new hire orientation please contact us. Builders Trust has seasoned Field Safety Consultants to assist you in setting up a solid program for your new employees.

***Safety is Everyone's Responsibility***