

Accidents are expensive: Working with Subcontractors

Here is the brief guidance for anyone who employs subcontractors to carry out works on their behalf. Employers with more than five employees must have a written, up-to-date health and safety policy. Although the health and safety responsibility is mainly on the principal contractor, he can be liable for the actions of his subcontractors. It is, therefore, essential to have the subcontracting policy in place. Active management, communication and co-operation are needed on both sides as the principal contractor has a legal responsibility towards his subcontractors and they owe a responsibility too.

The main contractor has to ensure the subcontractor is competent to perform the task safely and without unacceptable risk to other employees, members of the public and any others on the site. It is to ensure that agreed standards will be in place and avoid accidents on site due to negligence or incompetence of a subcontractor.

The following tips should help you reduce the risk of health and safety related problems when subcontracting works.

1. WORK WITH ACCREDITED SUBCONTRACTORS - require valid accreditation from SSIP or any SSIP accepted member what will demonstrate that subcontractor has already been assessed and reduce your costs.

2. Request H&S Assessment Questionnaire

- if the subcontractor is not accredited by any recognised body ask them to fulfil the health and safety assessment questionnaire in which they will outline their health and safety policy and procedures.

3. MONITOR SUPPLY CHAIN - ensure the subcontractors have the appropriate screening processes for their subcontractors. You can be liable for any issues that arise on your site, so being precautionous is recommended.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT - before commencing work ensure the subcontractors completed the risk assessment, which is not a legal requirement but proves best practice. More about H&S Risk Assessment can be found here: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm

5. CONSTRUCTION PHASE PLAN - it is a legal requirement for the principal contractor to create the CPP and it has to ensure that all subcontractors are aware of it. As it gives an overview of the

project and guidance on procedures. More about CCP can be found here:

6. SITE AUDITS and INSPECTIONS - when works commence, subcontractors should be regularly monitored until completion. It can be done by direct site supervision, clients feedback, ensuring subcontractors are following CPP, risk assessments and method statements.

7. CONFIRMATION of the Employers and Third Party Liability Insurance - require a proof of subcontractor insurance policy

8. REFERENCES - require the references from previous clients

9. WRITTEN AGREEMENT - writing the agreement can help to make each party's responsibilities clearer

- Provide them with information about the site – the hazards and risks, site rules, emergency procedures, the alarm, first-aid facilities, etc.
- Exchange information with them about the job and go through any safe working methods before work begins.

Law

If you manage contractors you need to be familiar with the requirements of the:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (the HSW Act);
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (the Management Regulations);
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 (CDM);
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH).

(Source: HSE)

This is an introductory guidance only, for more detailed information visit www.hse.gov.uk

Key points

- Signing in and out is important for all contractors.
- All contractors need a site contact.

