

Preventing Worker Injury: What Construction Managers Can Do

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A high-risk job usually comes with a better pay package, which is why most construction workers enjoy above-minimum compensation. However, their safety is consistently threatened because of the nature of their job. Can managers do something about it?

While you can't drive down the rate of occupational accidents to zero, you have the power to moderate the risk using some strategies. Learn your role in promoting workplace safety, and how to sidestep injuries and reduce the odds of accidents.

Be Stringent About Safety as Non-Negotiable

Safety isn't an option but an obligation. You're responsible for protecting your contractors and ensuring they go home to their families unscathed. Here are some ways to implement this non-negotiable onsite successfully.

Lead by Example

You're not just a policy enforcer but a safety role model, too. Employees tend to replicate whatever they see in their managers – if you violate the rules, expect the workers to do the same.

It turns out staff [integrate the values and attitudes](#) of their leaders into their own identities to satisfy the need to belong. This means you have the power to influence compliance with your safety policies by leading by example.



Reward Good Behaviors

Positive reinforcement – including verbal praise, incentives, certificates, or promotions – is another strategy to motivate people to treat safety seriously. By [recognizing correct team behaviors](#), the tendency to behave appropriately increases. Alternatively, ensure non-compliant employees know where they can grow.

Empower Employees to Correct Violations

Employees are capable of correcting hazards they witness and solving violations they encounter. However, the problem lies with their willingness to get involved. Inspire them to take up the role of safety enforcers to others and themselves by empowering them to be accountable.

Do audits, encourage communication, and establish an incident reporting system. When staff have access to necessary resources and feel supported, they'll volunteer to be advocates and treat safety as individual responsibility.

Utilize Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

A crucial part of effective safety programs is the use of PPE. Wearing gloves, masks, helmets, and steel toecap boots prevents injuries before they happen and reduces the risk of accidents onsite. If your crews don't use them, learn why, and address the problem.

Reasons for Noncompliance

Based on a study, the factors affecting employee's decision to [skip the use of PPE](#) include the following:

- » Teams aren't trained for appropriate use and lack perception of hazardous situations.
- » Items feel uncomfortable due to poor fit.
- » Wearing PPE prevents employees from working efficiently and effectively or leads to mistakes or errors.
- » PPE only applies to specific jobs.
- » There isn't enough gear available for everyone.
- » The lack of onsite supervision, safety compliance, and incentives discourage others from adhering.

In the same study, experts found 64.3% of workers experienced occupational accidents in the last 12 months. Either falling objects hit them, they fell from a height, or operating a machine or a tool injured them. Complying with PPE use could have minimized these events.

Safety Training Increases PPE Use Compliance

Experts found safety training [was the significant independent predictor](#) of PPE use and those who receive education are more likely to comply with the rules. Workers must know what each piece of gear is for and how to wear it properly. Imposing PPE use onsite and monitoring implementation increases adherence rate and reduces the risk of preventable accidents.

Create a Culture of Safety

Zoom in on the issues and develop ways to address them to make safety a permanent fixture in your workplace. Here are some steps to take.

Identify the Lagging Indicators of Safety Concerns

An example of a lagging indicator is the injury rate, which highlights areas demanding attention to minimize the probability of predictable accidents. Meanwhile, factors like safety training participation, inspection, and audits are leading indicators that convert into data.

Use an analytics tool to quantify and access historical safety data. Monitor the figures to know which problematic areas need reinforcement, whether it's safety awareness, execution, or audits.

Conduct a Risk Assessment

While historical data gives you a broader view of the safety issues, an assessment offers a boots-on-the-ground perspective of the risks in the workplace. Every construction project has a unique set of hazards, which may not be evident with data alone. Therefore, you must evaluate the level of peril for each project and modify your safety protocols based on your observations.

Form a Safety Committee

Construction managers [have over 100 responsibilities](#), ranging from payroll to quality control. Managing everything at once may feel overwhelming, so a department that oversees safety protocols should be a feature of your organization.

The people on this team can help you identify flaws in your safety initiatives. Moreover, they can expand your employees' awareness of protection standards [by organizing necessary annual inspections](#), and training for fall prevention and protection and harnesses, which are musts for those who handle heavy equipment.

Conduct Safety Meetings

Daily meetups can remind crews of the associated dangers in their jobs and encourage them to follow protocols for their own good. These don't have to be lengthy – 15 minutes can be

enough. You can also use this time to review potential hazards and mitigation tactics.

Do Equipment Maintenance Checks Regularly

In 2020, struck-by incidents that occurred at work [caused 150 deaths and 14,000 injuries](#) that weren't fatal. Equipment malfunction is one of the triggers of workplace accidents. Frequent maintenance checks ensure all components are in good working condition, decreasing the odds of failure during operation.

Encourage Open Communication

Stress the importance of communication. When employees understand how their feedback or opinion can safeguard them from accidents or save their co-workers' lives, they'll volunteer to bring up safety issues without fear of reprisal.

Your job is to take action and solve these concerns. By proactively addressing risks, people will feel their words are heard and valued.

Learn From Real-Life Incidents to Prevent Injury

Managers are responsible for ensuring everyone walks away from the site uninjured, so safety protocols should be stringent. It's not luck but correct implementation that empowers workers to dodge occupational dangers.

Don't wait for an accident before taking safety measures seriously – the data about injuries says it all. Learn from others' incidents and take necessary actions.



About the Author

Rose Morrison is a freelance writer with a passion for sustainable building and innovative construction technologies. She has interviewed numerous industry professionals to gain insight into the current challenges facing the built industry and developing strategies for overcoming them.

Rose has over five years' experience writing in the industry and is the current managing editor of [Renovated.com](https://www.renovated.com). She also regularly contributes to other publications, such as NCCER, The Safety Mag, and Geospatial World. Follow Rose on [Twitter](#).

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