

Temps, OSHA, Construction and Ron Burgundy

Insights

1.15.15



I'm attending and speaking at the AGC National Safety Committee meetings in San Diego as I type, the home of the great Ron Burgundy ([Anchorman 1](#) and [Anchorman 2](#)). I've participated in these committee meetings for about 12 years, and I enjoy few gatherings more. The General Contractors attending these meetings are the pick of the litter, and I learn as much from them as they do from me.

After speaking about [OSHA's Temporary Employee Initiative](#) as applied to construction, I was surprised to learn just how common temporary workers have become in construction. I should not have been surprised. It's common knowledge that the industry is experiencing a major shortage of skilled and unskilled workers. 30% of the construction workforce fled the industry during the Great Recession, plus, many workers are aging and retiring, and new craft workers are not replacing them as swiftly as in the past. A recent AGC survey determined that a whopping 25% of contractor respondents passed on bids last year because of manpower shortages!

Problems are especially severe in certain cities who are in the midst of massive building, as well as many more rural areas. As an example, many respondents from Oklahoma and Kansas explained that they near exclusively staff jobs with temps; and you can well imagine the responses from North Dakota contractors.

So it turns out that the OSHA Temporary Employee Initiative greatly affects contractors.

Let's cut to the chase and set out a few basic principles.

OSHA's initiative, so far, focuses only on temp employees referred by a provider, but the safety concepts apply to day workers, piecework and any other category of employees working on a non-routine basis.

Every employee exposed to the same hazards must receive the same training, PPE and supervision regardless of their classification. Hazards don't care if you're only a temporary employee.

Many employers have no idea and have never thought about how many temp workers they use or where they employ them, or for how long. Employers may have temps who have worked for them for three years.

As a starting point, contractors (or any type of employer) should determine where and how they employ temps at their various locations.

Ensure that they receive the same site-specific training as full time employees, use the same PPE, and are included in safety meetings and safety programs as applicable, such as Respiratory and Hearing Conservation.

Temps who stick with you for a while will become integrated into your system and your supervisors may forget that they were brought on and trained only for basic labor, clean-up, or other tasks, and ask them to do more complex and hazardous tasks. The temps may be eager to get ahead and will readily jump into these tasks ... and they may get injured or killed because they aren't trained.

Special problems are presented by the temps used by your second and third level subs use of temps

You may not have knowledge of the lack of training provided these temps, but OSHA will still determine if you SHOULD have known of these omissions with the exercise of due diligence.

Let's close with Leadership advice from the great Ron Burgundy, and please forgive me if you haven't seen the movies.

Be Humble: "Don't act like you're not impressed." — Ron Burgundy

Properly Use statistics: "They've done studies, you know. 60 percent of the time, it works every time." — Brian Fantana

Use Emotional Intelligence: "I'm in a glass case of emotion!" — Ron Burgundy

Conflict Resolution: "Well if you were a man, I'd punch you. Punch you right in the mouth." — Ron Burgundy

Be a Renaissance Person: "I'm very important. I have many leather-bound books and my apartment smells of rich mahogany." — Ron Burgundy

Heat Stress: “It’s so damn hot. Milk was a bad choice.” — Ron Burgundy

Decision-making: “I immediately regret this decision.” — Ron Burgundy

Presentation Skills: “He had a voice that could make a wolverine purr and suits so fine they made Sinatra look like a hobo.” — Narrator

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