

Temp agencies: best practices for worker safety and health

More from OSHA

Unless otherwise legally required, these recommendations are for the purpose of guidance and in some cases represent best practices. Many of these are summarized from OSHA's more detailed publication:

[osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3735.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3735.pdf)

Staffing agencies and host companies have a legal obligation to provide a safe and healthy working environment, and OSHA could hold both parties responsible if that doesn't happen. Here are some best practices that temp agencies can use to ensure that host employers are good partners in protecting worker safety and health.

Train agency staff to recognize safety and health hazards. If you don't have training expertise at your agency, use experienced outside consultants.

Evaluate the host employer's worksite and safety record before accepting a new client or a new job from a current client. Ask about overall injury trends, workers' comp experience rating, and whether there have been any serious workplace injuries. Discuss safety and health hazards and determine ways to control them, including related training. Decline to send workers to companies with poor safety records and practices.

Ask host employer why they are hiring temp workers. Are they looking to outsource liability or do they just need short-term help? Is it a temp-to-hire situation? Knowing the motivation provides insight into whether it is a safe place to send workers.

Ensure the host employer meets or exceeds your standards. Exchange and review injury prevention programs to verify that required safety programs and trainings are in place. Attend a new employee orientation (NEO) class to see firsthand the kind of training employees will receive. Beyond written programs, ensure management has a clear commitment to safety and sustains a strong safety culture, including continuous improvement and holding workers accountable to policies and procedures.

Do not place temp workers in high hazard work. Jobs such as operating certain machinery and equipment (including chainsaws), demolition, and working with



livestock require detailed training to ensure worker safety. Short-term work placements are not an appropriate fit for these hazards.

Define the scope of work, and safety and health responsibilities, in written contracts or agreements. For instance, determine which employer will provide personal protective equipment (PPE), if required, and who will provide required safety training. Include responsibilities for OSHA compliance standards. Communicate these responsibilities to the worker before the job starts to avoid misunderstandings.

Request and review written job descriptions before job placement so you can agree on the type of work to be performed and coordinate training. Have the host employer alert you if job duties change so you can reassess the risk and training requirements. Provide documentation to the host company that lists a temp worker's training and competencies related to the job. Don't underestimate the skills needed to do the job. Only send qualified workers.

Coordinate safety and health training and new project orientation. Temp worker training is a shared responsibility between the staffing agency and host employer. Agencies often provide general safety training, while the host employer provides required site- and task-specific training. (OSHA requires training in a language the worker understands.) Give workers cards with questions and/or job-related hazards, so they can talk with the host employer about site-specific training. Document all training and keep the records on file.

Visit the job site and check on employees. Follow up after initial placement to verify the host employer provided site-specific safety training and that the employee understood and remembers what they learned. Ensure that host employers train workers on what to do during an emergency, including evacuation procedures.

Establish a system for reporting hazards and injuries, and getting treatment. Agree on how the host employer will let the staffing agency know if a worker has been hurt, and vice versa. (Policies or programs should never discourage injury reporting.) Employers with direct day-to-day supervision are required to record the injury on their OSHA 300 injury log; this is usually the host employer.

Partner with the host employer to investigate accidents and prevent them from happening again. Offer to help improve their safety environment through joint inspections, safe work procedures, and safety committee work.

Create a culture that encourages employees to report injuries and hazards, and to speak up when they have not been trained in a hazardous task. Hold your own safety meetings or create a safety committee. Build loyalty, so employees will report dangerous working conditions and follow your directions on what jobs they are approved to perform. Follow-up on complaints.

