

Southern California Trade Contractors Association, Inc.

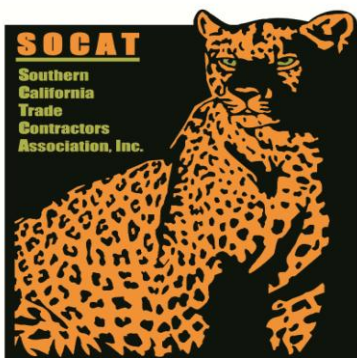
SAFETY NEWSLETTER

In This Issue

4th Quarter 2013

Top 5 Most Dangerous Jobs in America... Construction is #5

Safety Signage



Southern California Trade Contractors Association, Inc

Administrator

Mark Hebson
22925 Arlington Ave Ste 1
Torrance, CA 90501

Call Toll Free
(800) 530-9662
FAX 310-530-0081
www.socattrade.org

Workplace safety is a major concern for every employer. Ensuring the workers' safety and protecting them from injuries should be the primary interest of every company. A safe work environment not only protects the employees but has many other benefits as well.

Benefits of a Safe Work Environment

There are various benefits of providing the employees with a safer workplace. Some of them are:

1 Cost Benefits:

When employers provide their workers with good and safe environment, it is beneficial for the company as well. A little investment on safety equipment or procedures might seem a bit much at first, but having to spend double the amount on insurance claims and law suits later on, in case of an accident, is a bigger loss of the finances of the company. Moreover, due to lack of unfortunate incidences, the productivity process is rarely disrupted and hence, the company can achieve a good cost of production and saves money as well as time.

2 Boosts Morale:

A safer workplace creates a good morale among the employees and they are keener to work hard and efficiently because they are assured of their safety and dedicated entirely to their work. They have no other concerns that might interfere with their work and hence, their primary focus is on the task at hand. This again leads to saving of time as well as resources of the company. Furthermore, workers come to their job in good spirits, filled with eagerness and keen to continue their work. They are absent less often and their quality of work improves a great deal because of their dedication to their employment.

3 Good Company Reputation:

Companies that have fewer accidents are considered to be more reliable and efficient, so the relationship is inversely proportional. A company only benefits from being in the news if an achievement is being promoted. Word of an unfortunate incidence usually travels fast and is subjected to a lot of criticism from the public. This can ruin the company's reputation. In addition to that, people also begin to doubt the service provided by the company when they realize that the quality of safety, provided to the company's own workers is not up to mark. However, in spite of the importance of workplace safety, it is sometimes highly neglected and results in tragic occurrences. This is especially true for those work environments which are naturally very hazardous to the workers' health.

Dangerous Work Places

There are quite a few professions that dominate the top spots on the list of high-risk work environments. A few of them are:

1 Commercial Fishing: Fishing for individuals is a leisure activity. Spending the day lounging on a chair and waiting for a catch helps them relax. But fishing for a living is not as easy. Professional fishermen go out on boats to open waters in search of a catch. The seafood we eat is a result of their tireless efforts. These fishermen stay on their boats for long periods of time, facing storms and bad weather. Some of them get hurt by the fishing equipment used on the boat, while others get thrown off the boat due to the rough conditions of the high seas. Fishing is considered to be the most dangerous profession because its work environment is unpredictable and rough, and when you are a million miles from home or the nearest hospital, even the smallest of injuries can be fatal.

2 Logging: Loggers are responsible for chopping down wood and transporting it to factories for manufacturing. Without loggers, we would have no firewood or paper to use. These men risk their lives on a daily basis. Some of the dangers they face are getting injured by falling trees or getting severely hurt by the saws and other power tools that they use.

3 Pilots: We fly all over the world from one place to another in airplanes. But have we ever stopped to wonder

about the staff that operates within these planes? Aside from the air hostesses, we have our pilots, who are responsible for flying the plane.

Whether the plane holds cargo or passengers, the pilot has to put his life on the line and fly the plane to its destination. If there is even a slight technical fault or unpredicted bad weather, the plane may have difficulty in landing. It can also crash or explode if the pilots lose control of the plane. Hence, the pilot's job is a very important but a highly dangerous one.

4 Coal Miners: When it's the dawn of a new day, coal miners usually have a very difficult day ahead of them. Many miners have been killed in the past due to mining accidents. Workers in the mines are subjected to excessive heat, hazardous chemicals, radioactive substances, dangerous machines and even cave-ins. Yet, they enter their workplace with courage, in spite of being well-aware of the dangers that await them ahead.

5 Construction Workers:

Workers at a construction site can include roofers, builders and electricians, etc. Even though a lot of companies provide their workers with safety equipment, but still, there are many others, where such safety precautions are not taken. Slips, trips, falls from heights, electric shocks and injuries due to improper use of heavy machinery, are just some of the accidents that occur at a construction zone.

Construction Site Safety

All the above mentioned professions are dangerous, but construction site safety needs to be given primary importance. The reason being that fishing is done on high seas, pilots fly in the air, and mining and logging take place in forests or other wilderness areas. However, having such a dangerous workplace in the middle of a metropolis full of people is a huge risk.

Construction zones are not only dangerous for the people who work in them. They hold an even higher risk for the general public. Occurrence of fatal accidents due to lack of medical facilities or due to natural environmental conditions can be termed as 'Nature's Wrath'. But most of the 'accidents' that happen at construction sites are just simply due to carelessness on part of the workers or the contractors.

Comparison of Safety Regulations at Large and Small Firms

Large and small contractor firms have a very contrastive towards safety regulations.

Large contractors provide complete protective equipment to their workers. They try to make the site as safe as possible and are willing to invest in developing safety regulations and in organizing safety training sessions. The main reason for making this investment is that companies lose more money on insurance claims than on safety procedures. Moreover, large contractors have a reputation to maintain due to which they cannot

afford a mishap of any kind. So giving priority to their workers' safety is not a choice for them, its mandatory, because otherwise, it can have dire consequences in the future.

Small contractors are usually more concerned about their workers' health and they wish to provide a safe working environment but in most cases, they are unable to do so. They try to do what little they can and hope that what they have done will be enough.

Problems Faced by Small Contractors

The question arises that what do large contractors have that small ones don't? The answer is finance. Large contractors can actually afford the expense of the safety equipment and training, whereas small contractors are incapable of doing so. As a result, safety takes a back seat and the dangerous work is given first priority. Moreover, small construction firms often face work and family conflicts where workers are sometimes concentrating more on their own problems than the job at hand. In such cases, being mentally absent from their work can lead to disasters for them and the firm.

In addition to all this, many contractors run their businesses on a small scale and the whole family is involved in completing the projects together. In such cases, they hire extra labor only when needed. So training the labor is of no use to them because they will leave the firm after the completion of the construction.

Even in permanent employment scenarios, small firms do not have very binding contracts and labor force may come and go as they please. They usually move around a lot and pick up random jobs of their choosing. Spending money on training the workers might prove to be a complete loss if they leave the company shortly afterwards.

Finding a Solution

It is very difficult to find a solution to the safety issues faced by small contractors. However, something must be done. In order to assist companies in boosting their safety conditions, government should play a part. Either it should provide loans to them so that they can easily manage their safety issues or government can organize such training sessions where workers can be trained free of charge or at a minimum cost.

NGOs and charity organizations, as well as banks, should provide loans to small firms or should arrange such training sessions to benefit the workers as well as the companies who cannot afford to pay high costs for safety.

There are also certain companies that train workers about safety methods. They have different programs that they use to create awareness in the workers regarding how they are supposed to act in a crisis and how they are supposed to deal with workplace dangers. Such companies should make efforts to hold sessions at low costs so that every company can send their workers to benefit from proper training.

Safety Signs

An inexpensive way of increasing the workers' awareness of workplace dangers, is to mark the hazardous areas with safety signs. A single meeting needs to be held beforehand and workers should be told that following the signs is for their own benefit. The importance of the signs must be emphasized and then the entire site should be checked and marked with signs before construction begins.

Safety signs should contain text as well as pictures so that workers have no difficulty in understanding them and if any sign has no text, that sign should be clearly explained on the first day of work. These signs come in a wide variety and are easily available on-line for free. In fact, some websites even allow us to make our own signs or to customize the traditional ones.

Kinds of Safety Signs:

There are six types of signs that can be used at a construction site:

1 Danger Signs:

These signs are usually bright yellow in color and are used in areas, where the conditions are supposed to be life threatening. "Danger – Incomplete Scaffold" and "Danger – Risk of Electric Shock" can be examples of such signs.

2 Caution Signs:

Caution signs are also bright yellow in color. They are usually placed in areas where care needs to be taken. For instance, these signs can be used in areas where;

- Forklifts or other vehicles are being operated
- Objects are being lifted overhead
- Floor is uneven
- Roofs are incomplete or unstable
- Dangerous or hazardous chemicals are present

3 Mandatory Signs:

These signs indicate instructions that must be followed such as; wearing protective gear, hard hats, gloves, boots, etc. These signs are blue in color.

4 Prohibition Signs:

Actions that are not allowed within the premises can be denoted through these signs. "No Smoking" and "No Entry" signs can be good examples of prohibition signs. These signs usually have a white background and the action is drawn in black with a red crossed circle over it.

5 Fire Signs:

Fire signs are red in color and are used to indicate fire alarms or other firefighting equipment, such as fire extinguishers, fire hose and fire phones.

6 Emergency Signs:

Emergency exits are usually denoted by green signs which have an arrow pointed in the correct direction. These signs can also lead you to first aid equipment or other emergency related facilities.

Conclusion

Construction site safety is a major concern and small contractors need to

manage their safety issues effectively. It is the right of their workers that they should be provided with the basic safety equipments. If making such an investment is not possible for the company, then at least some awareness should be created amongst the workers, regarding the dangers of the construction site. This should be done before the job is initiated.

Moreover, if expenses cannot be made for safety procedures, firms can always print and place the various safety signs around the site. This will not ensure complete safety, but the workers will be made aware of the dangers around them through those signs