

The need and use of comprehensive safety and health plans for construction compan...

[Law](#), [Security](#)



In modern day construction, safety and health standards are continuing to develop every day in an effort to mitigate the risk for owners, contractors, trades, and all employees. In addition to mitigating risk, the primary purpose of safety and health requirements imposed by organizations such as the Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA) are to reduce the number of workplace injuries as well as work related injuries, illnesses, and deaths. The textbook I have been reading throughout my OSHA Standards class includes current death rates by industry as well as workplace injuries. As it stands, the construction industry is ranked third in workplace deaths and first in workplace injuries. The intention of this research paper is to promote the need and use of comprehensive safety and health plans as well as the importance of ensuring subcontractors have the proper safety documentation on file from the General Contractor's perspective.

Unfortunately, it is a common occurrence for construction professionals to disagree on the importance and value of preparing comprehensive written health and safety plans. Some will argue that the time needed to create such a plan could be better utilized in the field itself rather than behind the walls of an office. It has been proven through strenuous research that the time required to write up these safety and health plans do in actuality contribute to the prevention of workplace accidents, injuries, illnesses, and even associated costs. The costs relate to those that can limit productivity as well as the company's profit margins. A comprehensive safety and health plan is only said to be effective if it is written and accepted. A plan that is comprehensive shall include the following if a company is to accept full counsel of federal and state regulations; a safety and health policy, safety

and health goals, roles and responsibilities, discipline policy and procedures, job site inspections, accident investigations, record keeping, training, medical response and first aid, emergency response, and miscellaneous components such as fall protection, blood borne pathogens and exposure control of them. It is very common to see well written plans in larger construction companies as the larger companies are often exposed to greater liabilities and are often looked at as having “ deep pockets,” making them targets in personal injury and compensation claims. Because of these, such companies will also have liability and workers compensation insurance to mitigate their liability.

While there are several reasons that can attribute to why a construction company should make the proper arrangements to prepare comprehensive written safety and health plans, the first that comes to mind, as well as the text is the ethical reasoning. With that said, ethically speaking, the time taken to develop a written safety and health plan is the right thing to do, as it contributes to the companies’ responsibility for providing safe working conditions to its tradesman and employees. As stated in the text and to attest to this statement, “ One of the best ways to ensure a quality work environment is to include a comprehensive written safety and health plan. This can be seen in the fact that companies without such a plan experience thirty percent more than those with written plans”.

In addition to ethical factors, there are regulatory, economic, and practical factors to consider in terms of rationale for written safety and health plans. The regulatory factors are those of which may be more critical and must be

considered as they are set in place by federal and state entities. These factors do not necessarily state that a construction company must have a comprehensive written health and safety plan, but they do require written plans specific to issues regarding fall protection, emergency action, and blood borne pathogens and exposure control. While a construction establishment may be in compliance by providing written plans for these issues, providing a well-rounded written plan is always better as it will do more than comply with regulations, but will help establish and maintain a higher quality work environment. In terms of economic factors, those who are in the construction industry know that a job's profits are contingent upon several variables such as design discrepancies, change orders, etc. However, one variable that is often overlooked is that pertaining to the safety and health status of the jobsite itself. In other words, a jobsite that is unsafe with several potential safety and health hazards can turn to be a very costly one as well. A common quote to help make this point clear is, "If you don't have time to do it right the first time, how will you have the time to do it right the second time?" The point is that it is much more cost effective to allocate funds and time develop a comprehensive safety and health plan that will help to manage a safe and healthy work environment than to pay for accidents and injuries after they happen. Construction Safety and Health written by David L. Goetsch states that a well written safety and health plan in which is effectively implemented can save a company money in the following aspects: "Holding down insurance costs, reducing costly litigation, reducing the number of compliance inspections and associated penalties, lead to more contracts based upon a good reputation, increasing productivity

of employees, and by reducing the temporary and permanent disability claims.”

Lastly, the practical factors to consider are factors that relate more to common sense, but must be reiterated as I find today that common sense isn't so common. Practically speaking, a construction company providing a comprehensive written safety and health plan is the most effective and best way to establish a safe and healthy work environment. This is because such a plan would force establishments to put their own commitments to safety and health in writing while also making them establish policies and goals that they will continue to develop and improve over time and apply to future jobs assisting their success and reputation. In addition, “ the plan commits to writing the procedures that must be followed by all employees and subcontractors while being effective in communicating said policies, procedures and goals related to the quality of the work environment”. One way that they can develop these plans over time is by incorporating the Deming Cycle. The Deming Cycle developed by W. Edwards Deming is a great way to assist in planning, implementing, and evaluating a safety and health program. There are four steps to the Deming Cycle; Step 1: Plan, Step 2: Do, Step 3: Check, and Step 4: Act. The first step would be to develop a comprehensive safety and health program. Once a plan is developed, step two would be to implement the safety and health plan to all employees. While the plan has been developed and implemented, step three would be to periodically administer checks to ensure the effectiveness of such plan. Step four involves acting on what was learned from step three and then to

administer and develop these into a revised plan. In other words, the cycle would be restarted and continues to repeat. This is a great way to ensure your safety and health plan is up to date and as effective as possible based on the circumstances.