

5 Tips for Protecting Temporary Workers



Temporary workers are used in various industries to fill various positions, some of which face serious safety risks. But an IWH study found that although temporary workers may be exposed to such risks, they have less OHS protection than regular workers.

Here are just a few examples of situations in which temporary workers were injured:

- A temporary worker in Alberta fell from an opening in a wall and suffered a broken leg and three broken ribs. The company he was working for was convicted of several safety violations. In fining the company \$100,000, the court noted its 'apparent disregard of the health and safety of its employees, and in particular, the temporary workers' [*R. v. Canadian Consolidated Salvage Ltd. (Clearway Recycling)*, [2013] A.J. No. 477, May 6, 2013].
- A temporary worker in Ontario had his foot run over by a truck. The waste management company was convicted of failing to properly train him on its procedures and fined \$150,000 [*BFI Canada Inc.*, Govt. News Release, Nov. 21, 2011].
- A grocery store in Ontario brought in a truck driver from a temporary employment agency. The driver, who hadn't been trained on using a lifting device, put it in reverse and drove it off the dock, breaking his ankle and hurting his arm. The grocery store pleaded guilty to a safety violation and was fined \$75,000. [*LOEB Canada Inc.*, MOL News Release, May 8, 2006].

Temporary workers in the US are equally at risk. So OSHA and NIOSH released recommended practices for protecting temporary workers, which are also useful for protecting Canadian temporary workers.

Although the best practices are geared toward the staffing agencies that provide temporary workers to other employers, there are tips companies that use temporary workers can take away from these practices, including:

1. With the staffing agency, review all worksites to which the workers might foreseeably be sent, the task assignments and job hazard analyses to identify and eliminate potential OHS hazards and identify necessary training and protections for each worker.
2. Request and review the safety training and any certification records of the temporary workers who'll be assigned to your company.
3. Ensure that your contract with the staffing agency clearly states which employer is responsible for specific OHS duties, such as who'll provide necessary PPE for the assigned workers.
4. Provide specific training to temporary workers tailored to the particular

hazards at your workplace and of the jobs they'll be assigned to do as well as a general safety orientation. That is, give temporary workers safety training that's identical or equivalent to that provided to your own employees performing the same or similar work.

5. Inform the staffing agency promptly if a temporary worker is injured or becomes ill. And make sure that temporary workers know and understand your injury reporting process and how to get first aid if needed.