

How to Monitor Contractors for Safety Compliance: A Guide for Canadian OHS Managers



Hiring contractors brings flexibility and specialized expertise to a workplace, but it also introduces safety risks that must be carefully managed. Unlike full-time employees, contractors operate under their own company's policies, and **if they fail to follow safety rules, your organization could still be held responsible** for any injuries, incidents, or regulatory violations.

That's why **monitoring contractors for safety compliance** is critical. But how can OHS managers ensure that contractors are adhering to safety protocols **without micromanaging or creating conflicts**?

This guide breaks down **best practices for contractor safety monitoring**, jurisdictional differences across Canada, and includes **contract-ready safety clauses** that you can use to establish clear oversight mechanisms.

Why Monitoring Contractor Safety is Essential

Unlike employees, contractors may not be fully immersed in

your company's safety culture. **They may bring their own safety standards, training gaps, or compliance weaknesses**—and that creates risks.

Failing to monitor contractor safety can lead to:

- **Workplace injuries and fatalities** that could have been prevented.
- **Fines and regulatory penalties** for failure to ensure a safe worksite.
- **Legal liability** if a contractor's negligence causes harm.
- **Reputational damage** if a safety incident gains public attention.

In Canada, employers **are legally responsible** for the health and safety of **all workers on their site, including contractors**. This means you can't just assume that a contractor is following safety rules—you need a structured system to **track, assess, and enforce** compliance.

How to Effectively Monitor Contractor Safety

1. Pre-Qualification: Screening Before the Job Begins

Monitoring starts **before a contractor even sets foot on-site**. OHS managers must conduct **thorough pre-screening** to verify that contractors have the **necessary safety policies, training, and compliance history** to work safely.

This includes:

- **Reviewing past safety performance** (incident history, regulatory violations, certifications).
- **Confirming that workers are trained** in required safety programs (e.g., WHMIS, fall protection, confined space entry).
- **Assessing safety policies** to ensure they meet or exceed

company standards.

- **Requesting proof of insurance and liability coverage** in case of an incident.

2. Site-Specific Safety Orientation & Training

Even if a contractor has general safety training, **each worksite has unique risks**. Before work begins, contractors must complete a **site-specific orientation** that covers:

- **Emergency procedures** (e.g., evacuation plans, muster points).
- **Hazard-specific training** (e.g., confined spaces, electrical hazards).
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements**.
- **Reporting procedures for incidents, near misses, and hazards**.

Orientation should be **mandatory**, and all attendees should **sign an acknowledgment** confirming they understand the site's safety requirements.

Sample Contract Clause:

The Contractor shall ensure that all personnel assigned to the worksite complete the Company's safety orientation prior to commencing work. The Contractor acknowledges that failure to complete required orientation may result in removal from the worksite or contract termination.

3. Active Monitoring & Inspections

Safety compliance isn't a **one-time check**—it requires ongoing oversight. OHS managers should:

- **Conduct random and scheduled safety inspections** of contractor work areas.
- **Monitor PPE use and safe work practices** in real time.
- **Assign safety representatives** to oversee contractor operations.

- **Encourage workers to report contractor safety violations anonymously.**

To **maintain fairness**, inspections should be **consistent and documented**. Using a digital contractor management system can help track compliance and generate reports.

Sample Contract Clause:

The Company reserves the right to conduct unannounced safety inspections of the Contractor's work activities. The Contractor agrees to cooperate fully and address any identified safety concerns immediately. Persistent non-compliance may result in contract suspension or termination.

4. Incident & Non-Compliance Reporting

Contractors must be held **accountable** for their safety performance. Establish clear rules for:

- **How and when to report incidents** (injuries, near misses, hazards).
- **The corrective action process** if safety violations occur.
- **Enforcement mechanisms** (warnings, fines, contract termination).

Sample Contract Clause:

The Contractor must report all workplace incidents, injuries, and safety violations to the Company's OHS department within [24 hours]. The Contractor shall provide a written incident report detailing the cause, corrective actions taken, and preventative measures for future avoidance. Failure to report incidents may result in contract termination.

For serious safety violations, a **progressive enforcement approach** should be used:

1. **Verbal Warning** – Immediate correction required.

2. **Written Notice** – Formal documentation of the violation.
3. **Work Stoppage** – If the issue is severe or repeated.
4. **Contract Termination** – If violations continue.

5. **Post-Project Safety Review**

Once the contractor's work is completed, **conduct a final safety performance evaluation** to assess:

- **Compliance with OHS policies throughout the contract.**
- **Number of safety violations or incidents recorded.**
- **Effectiveness of hazard controls and corrective actions.**

This review helps determine whether the contractor should be **approved for future work** or flagged for non-compliance.

Sample Contract Clause:

Upon completion of the contract, the Company will conduct a post-project safety review. Contractors with repeated safety violations or incidents may be disqualified from future work opportunities.

Jurisdictional Differences in Contractor Safety Monitoring

While contractor safety oversight is required across Canada, specific legal responsibilities vary by province.

Jurisdiction	Employer Responsibilities for Contractor Safety	Key Compliance Considerations
Federal (Canada Labour Code, Part II)	Employers must ensure contractor safety compliance on federally regulated worksites.	Contractors must follow the site owner's OHS policies and federal regulations.

Jurisdiction	Employer Responsibilities for Contractor Safety	Key Compliance Considerations
Ontario	Employers must take every reasonable precaution for contractor safety under OHSA.	JHSC must be involved in contractor oversight for large workplaces.
British Columbia	WorkSafeBC requires prime contractors to coordinate safety for multi-employer sites.	The site owner may be liable if contractor safety is not actively monitored.
Alberta	Employers must ensure contractors meet OHS Act and Code requirements .	Joint hazard assessments are mandatory before work begins.
Québec	CNESST requires strict contractor safety plans for high-risk work.	Employers must verify contractor training and competency before hiring.

Final Thoughts: Make Contractor Monitoring a Safety Priority

Monitoring contractors for safety compliance **isn't just about avoiding liability**—it's about **protecting everyone on-site**.

By implementing **pre-qualification screening, active oversight, and strict reporting procedures**, OHS managers can ensure that **contractors meet the same safety standards as full-time employees**.

Strong monitoring doesn't mean **micromanaging**—it means **proactively preventing incidents before they happen**.

Before hiring a contractor, ask yourself: **Are we prepared to**

enforce safety as rigorously with contractors as we do with our own employees? If not, now is the time to put the right monitoring systems in place.