

Poor Oversight of Your Contractors Can Be Costly



Working with contractors always poses risks. If workers for a contractor commit safety violations or cause a safety incident, your company could be held responsible. So it's important to properly oversee the work being done by your contractors and their workers. Poor oversight can have serious consequences.

A contractor working for Enbridge Gas damaged a valve connected to a gas line. The gas ignited, damaging a building and destroying several vehicles and construction equipment. No one was injured, although adjacent businesses, including a strip mall and day care, were evacuated as a precautionary measure.

A National Energy Board (NEB) report on the incident was critical of Enbridge's 'contractor control.'

For example, the NEB found that the company didn't ensure that the requirements for safety meetings and work permits as outlined in its contract with the contractor were met. In addition, the company's gas distribution unit didn't have a copy of its safety manual on site and didn't adequately communicate hazards to contracted workers or make sure they were following proper procedures.

Bottom line: The NEB said, 'When companies choose to employ a contractor, they remain responsible for the safety performance of the contractor and its employees. This oversight requires effective communication with contracted workers and adequate supervision and control of their activities.'

For more information and guidance on working with contractors and avoiding Enbridge's mistakes, go to the Contractor Compliance Centre, which includes, among other things:

- Protections to include in an agreement with a contractor
- 12 dos & don'ts for dealing with contractors
- How to do a prequalification safety audit
- Contractor document checklist.

Go to Safety Smart for an article on the supervisor's role in working with contractors. Not a subscriber to SafetySmart? Sign up for a free trial.