Contractor safety by Cari Gray
When you bring outside people in to do work

Before you begin
Determine if you have a current contractor safety policy. If you do, consider updating and reviewing it, and communicating it to your employees. If you do not, consider creating one with your safety team or employees. Think about the people that enter your workplace who are not employees. Are they exposing your employees, other contractors or your customers to additional hazards? Determine if you have an audit process for outside contractors. Review the discussion for the program's key points.

Introduction
Almost all companies use contractors. They may come to your facility for many reasons, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning problems and many other work assignments. Because they are not on your payroll, there is a potential for serious injury to themselves or your employees. It is crucial you determine who else could expose your employees to injuries and create a process to minimize the hazards.

Discussion
Companies often bring outside contractors in to do dangerous or non-routine jobs. If a serious injury results from this work, companies can face inspections, citations and lawsuits. Some companies require they review and prequalify contractors before they allow them to enter their work site.

Once on site, contractors need to have a meeting prior to starting the work. In addition, they need to have audits during the work's operations. If you see unsafe behaviors, confront the employees and correct the behavior or remove them from the premises. These tools help keep employees safe.

Process steps
Your first step is to take an inventory of what services and companies your employer uses. The second step is to create a policy and a program. Third, you implement the program and train your employees. The final step is to evaluate - at least annually - the program and make needed changes. Create the process using a safety committee or employee input. Involve the person responsible for purchasing because he or she can be a gatekeeper for part of this process.

You must have a contractor portion included in the Hazard Communication written program 1910.1200 (e). (See the reference section below for other Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards that include a contractor component.) However, an all-inclusive written contractor program is not an OSHA requirement for most employers. But, it is a best practice that can help you properly manage contractors.

When creating or updating your contractor-safety program, there are topics you need to include. They are:

O Prequalification;
O Responsibilities;
O Emergency procedures;
O Training requirements;
O Housekeeping;
O Personal protective equipment;
O Fire prevention;
O Reporting an incident;
O Hazard Communication Standard requirements including informing your employer about chemicals brought into the facility;
O Communicating the emergency action plan to the contractor that includes your interior shelter locations, alarm meanings and outside assembly locations;
O A company-equipment policy;
O Enforcement and company safety rules.

You may include other relevant topics. These rules and topics may be centrally located in a Contractor Safety Handbook and you may refer to them in your policy.

Group activities
As a group, make a list of what type of outside contractor services your company uses. In addition, identify which companies/contractors you regularly have at your facility. Once this list is complete, consider qualifying contractors before you permit them in your facility.

Ask employees what types of safety rules the contractors need to follow. Discuss with employees how they can participate in the contractor-safety process. This includes being involved in audits, reporting unsafe behaviors or aiding in the prequalification process.

Summary
Once you create the contractor-safety program, review with your employees the requirements and procedures. Do this at least annually.

If you involve employees in creating the program and its policies, they are more likely to recognize, approach and ensure contractors are working safely.

References

Articles
For Contractors, Safety Means Planning (eLCOSH): http://www.elcosh.org/en/document/754/d000712/forcontractors%252C-safety-means-planning.html

Web sites
Contractor Safety Program (Dow Jones/New York Post): http://www.dowjones.com/ESP/contractor_safety.html

Contractor Safety Handbook (California State University, Fullerton): http://ehis.fullerton.edu/OHS/OCCSafety/ContractorSafetyHandbook.pdf

Standards
OSHA standards that reference contractor safety requirements: OSHA 29 CFR 1910.38, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1200, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.147, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.119, OSHA 29 CFR 1926.98

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