



FOCUS ARTICLE

Construction Site Safety Rules

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Construction sites are high hazard environments, and while outsiders may perceive the industry as dangerous and incident-prone, the reality is that safety receives a good deal of attention on site. We support you with our expertise, because it is our obligation to improve safety. The guidelines and considerations shared here are reminders of the big-picture principles that lead to fewer on-site incidents and a safer, healthier workforce. Zero harm to humans and the environment is achievable through effective leadership, engagement, consistency and, in the right measure, innovation.

Construction Site Safety Starts with Strong Leadership

Leaders are role models. They set the tone on a worksite and influence site safety for good or ill. While strong technical skills may help them manage certain aspects of a project, they have little to do with influencing human behaviour in beneficial ways.

Providing leaders with training that allows them to draw on a range of leadership styles as appropriate, to ask constructive questions, to understand and communicate rules and values effectively and to acknowledge employees for a job well done helps create an atmosphere of trust and respect that lays the foundation for safety.

In fact, it is difficult to overstate the impact strong leadership has on construction site safety. In this context, strength comes from building relationships and connecting with people. The best way to do this is to be present, which on a dynamic worksite means walking around, engaging people in meaningful conversation about how and why they work the way they do and being attuned to the mindset of individuals on the team. It is true that this requires intense interaction, but being aware that productivity decreases after 8 hours on the job, for example, and that some workers may have an hour commute both ways has implications for both safety and quality.

It is also up to leadership to hold people accountable, not in a punitive manner, but rather as a means of encouraging safe behaviours. Accountability schemes that rely on a card or point system to keep workers “in line” are much less successful than a conversation but only because they are not used fairly. They are no less successful than a conversation, but they need to be used more justly and systematically. Good leaders acknowledge a breach directly and seek to understand why it’s happened through discussion.

An Engaged Workforce Reinforces Construction Site Safety

Workforce engagement is an outgrowth of good leadership. An environment where people feel they can speak up and that they are heard gives them agency and the opportunity to be part of solutions. When it comes to safety, every individual on site, regardless of rank, education or job description, contributes. Workers who downplay their significance (“I’m only a _____“) may not feel fully involved in the project, which is an organisational weakness from a safety point of view.

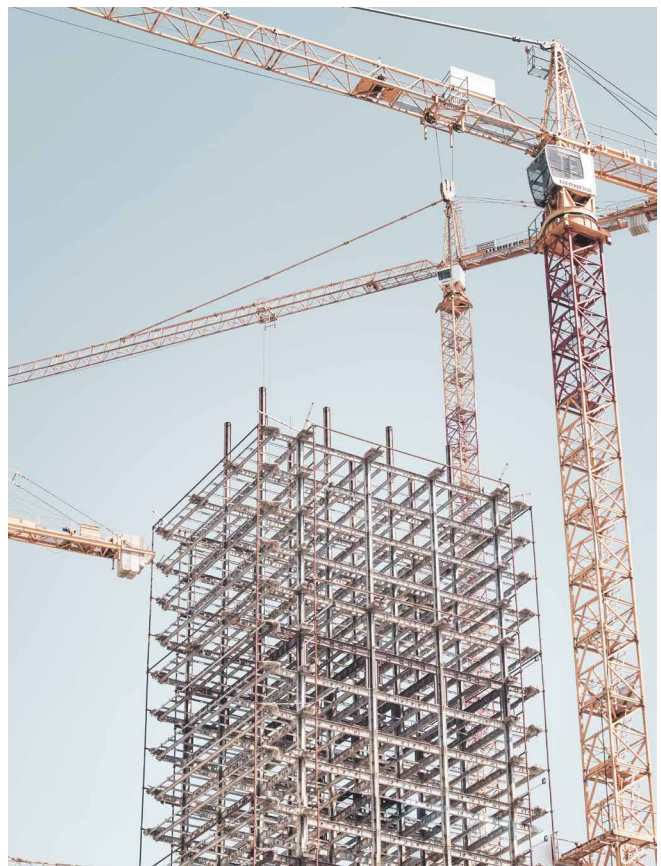
Cultivating a **culture of care** encourages an attitude of concern for everyone working on site, as well as for processes, procedures and equipment. Human factors and the interface between people and machines or people and processes are areas where risk can arise. In a culture built on trust and respect, people are empowered to say “no” to protect themselves, their mental health, their colleagues and their equipment.

Strive for Consistency Across Sites and Divisions for Optimal Construction Site Safety

When leaders understand rules and regulations as well as company values and communicate them effectively, consistency is well within reach. But consistency also means shedding assumptions, whether related to an individual’s experience and technical knowledge, their comprehension and skill in the primary language used on site, their cultural background or their aptitude. A comprehensive induction programme can help ensure that everyone has access to the same safety information, as can campaigns that reinforce target behaviours on site and accommodations where multiple languages are in use or cultural differences play a role.

The Role of Creativity and Innovation in Construction Site Safety

Safety is dynamic, made up of human behaviours and interactions among people, equipment and processes, none of which are static. As a result, safety can suffer if the systems in place to promote it stagnate and calcify through over-familiarity or neglect. Fortunately, a healthy on-site culture fosters safe innovation through open communication between workers and their leaders. Those working with specific machines or processes on a daily basis may find ways to make their jobs safer, more efficient or more economical. When they are empowered to share their ideas, safety performance—and possibly productivity—benefits.



Technology and interdisciplinary thinking can also contribute to continuous safety improvement. Some sites have adopted a practice familiar to elite athletes who record their performances in order to pinpoint areas of improvement. Other industries can also be a source of inspiration, like the aviation sector, whose evolution, practices and excellent safety track record have been studied and adapted by companies of all types.

Do's and Don'ts in Construction Safety

While these guidelines are admittedly far-reaching, it's still possible to summarise them in checklist form for easy reference:

- > Do understand the value of effective leaders and invest in their education.
- > Do find ways to engage the workforce so that they identify with the project and its success.
- > Do prioritise consistency in the application of rules within and across sites.
- > Do encourage innovative thinking that leads to safer operations.
- > Don't lead from a desk or rely so heavily on technical expertise that true leadership suffers.

- > Don't undermine workforce engagement through an overemphasis on productivity.
- > Don't make assumptions or ignore cultural differences.
- > Don't stifle innovation through a failure to communicate.

Sometimes enlisting the help of safety experts is the most effective way for companies operating in the construction industry to tackle intransigent issues on site or discover viable ways to address new challenges. Leadership coaching, **workforce training** and cultural change programmes are a few of the services on offer that can help remove obstacles to optimal safety performance.

DEKRA Organisational & Process Safety

DEKRA Organisational and Process Safety are a behavioural change and process safety consultancy company. Working in collaboration with our clients, our approach is to assess the process safety and influence the safety culture with the aim of 'making a difference'.

In terms of behavioural change, we deliver the skills, methods, and motivation to change leadership attitudes, behaviours and decision-making among employees; supporting our clients in creating a culture of care and measurable sustainable improvement of safety outcomes is our goal.

The breadth and depth of expertise in process safety makes us globally recognised specialists and trusted advisors. We help our clients to understand and evaluate their risks, and work together to develop pragmatic solutions. Our value-adding and practical approach integrates specialist process safety management, engineering and testing. We seek to educate and grow client competence to vide sustainable performance improvement; partnering with our clients we combine technical expertise with a passion for life preservation, harm reduction and asset protection.

We are a service unit of DEKRA SE, a global leader in safety since 1925 with over 45,000 employees in 60 countries and 5 continent. As a part of the world's leading expert organisation DEKRA, we are the global partner for a safe world.

We have offices throughout North America, Europe, and Asia.

For more information, visit www.dekra-uk.co.uk/en/dekra-organisational-and-process-safety/

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