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safety solutions

A FULL-TIME JOB

On-Site Safety

having a dedicated risk and safety director pays dividends

By Murray Rice

I have been running a construction company for 15 years, and I am always looking for ways to streamline builds, meet deadlines, and improve quality. However, the biggest issue facing my company is safety and making sure everyone is following the rules. Like most shell contractors, a majority of my employees on site are subcontractors. With different builds across the state, my company was continually looking for ways to make sure everyone on our sites was clear of the rules, and more importantly, that they were following those rules.

CREATING A POSITION

Having the safest worksite possible is extremely important to my company. I realized to make that happen we needed to go above and beyond the mandated safety standards. So, we created a new position, a Risk and Safety Director. It is something that has worked well for us, and I encourage other companies to try it.

SAFETY DIRECTOR ROLE

The safety director position is a full-time job, with the sole responsibility of checking sites, training crews, and

beyond. The safety director works in conjunction with our area managers and superintendents. All of them supervise our construction sites across the state to make sure we have high safety awareness, and our employees and subcontractors know and comply with the rules. We have onsite supervisors at every build to watch what is going on all day long. They can alert the safety director to any issues or call him for a visit if they think the subs need more training in a specific area.

Our safety director also does in-house training for Richard and Rice employees,



l to r, Co-owners Murray Rice and Gaetan Richard on the jobsite

since he has several OSHA certifications allowing him to teach 10- and 30-hour OSHA classes. A goal for the company is to make sure all superintendents and area managers have their 30-hour OSHA class certification. Our safety director teaches these classes and customizes them to Richard and Rice employees so that our site superintendents and area managers can be the "competent person" for Richard and Rice.

TOOLBOX TOPICS

The safety director also plans out weekly "toolbox topics," which focuses on specific equipment used on the jobsites. Each week, Richard and Rice superintendents get a "toolbox topic" that must be signed by the subcontractors stating that the crew read and understood everything. Those documents are then filed to ensure that we have a record of our additional safety measures. We also have a regularly updated R&R health and safety manual on every jobsite with every superintendent.

BENEFITS OF NEW POSITION

It has been about 2 years since we created the safety director position, and it has paid off in many ways. Our workmans' comp premium is lower, due to fewer accidents and resulting in our low modification rate of just .74. This reduces overall cost, something customers appreciate. Another benefit is that companies are more likely to hire us

since they know the care we take with our jobsites. No builder wants someone hurt on their jobsite, so knowing that we go above and beyond regulations is something that comes into play as they are going through bids for projects.

CLOSING THOUGHT

This position is so valuable because it has created a culture of safety awareness, reduced injuries, and costs as well. Investing in your company's safety can go a long way, and a safety director is an investment that is sure to pay dividends. ■

about the author

Murray Rice is the co-owner and principal of Richard and Rice Construction Co. Inc., a full-service general contracting company that specializes in foundations, masonry, and carpentry, working on single family, multifamily, and commercial jobsites throughout Florida. For more, visit www.richardandrice.com.

