Managing temporary workers

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Institution of Occupational Safety and Health

With more contracted workers taking time off due to the extra precautions and anxiety that the coronavirus (Covid-19) has caused, organisations may need to employ temporary labour to cover production and working capacity.

Temporary workers will need additional training to allow them to familiarise themselves with process and procedure, therefore ensuring their health and safety while at work. Getting any temporary workers up to speed quickly comes at a major risk of their being inadequately trained.

Training will be an important factor for organisations when employing temporary labour. Additional training should ensure temporary workers are trained in any specific jobs or tasks they have been allocated to complete, including specific work equipment if they are required to use any. Having a robust, effective training programme could speed up the onboarding processes.

Temporary labour may be a first for many organisations following Covid-19, so what should temporary workers be trained in?

Other languages
If a worker is not a native speaker, a language test may be conducted to ensure they will be able to understand all necessary policies, procedures and any verbal communication while working. Should a worker be unable to pass a language test, pictures or translated information are alternatives.

Human resources
A key policy in the wake of Covid-19 will be the one on sickness and absence. Organisations need to protect their workers from contracting Covid-19 and must account for the possibility of their workers being sick due to it. Organisations need to inform temporary workers what to do should they show symptoms of Covid-19 or just generally become sick.

Site layout
Site layout is important to understand so temporary workers know the quickest and safest route in case of an emergency. If any routes are temporarily unavailable, has this been communicated to both permanent and temporary workers?

Workplace transport
All workers should be trained on transport routes and speed restrictions for any workplace transport they have to use.

Emergency procedures
Emergency procedures are key to ensuring workers are safe and know what to do in the case of an emergency. Fire and first aid reporting should definitely be included in emergency procedures. Are temporary workers aware of what to do in the case of a fire?

General safety information
This includes hazards, risks, controls, local legislation and PPE (personal protective equipment).

Machinery
If the worker is using machinery they must be trained on a safe operating procedure and/or safe system of work.

New information following Covid-19
This includes updated policies and procedures which may allow workers to feel protected following the pandemic, knowing the organisation has taken extra measures to ensure a safer workplace.

Using chemicals
If the worker is completing cleaning tasks using chemicals, training must be conducted so that they understand the dangers of the substance/s they are working with, including safe handling, hygiene and protective equipment.

Training
Any training given to temporary workers should be completed by a competent person from the organisation.

For more information visit
www.iosh.com/covid-19-managing-temporary-workers