

Best practices for enforcing policies with contractors

By Bill Burket, Environmental Health and Safety Compliance Consultant

Organizations that hire and employ contractors and suppliers look for professional and responsible people who can do the work. They expect that their contractors will follow safety policies and procedures to ensure that safety incidents are avoided. They rely on their contractors to follow the guidelines, but the truth is many of these companies have no way to verify compliance. And without policy enforcement, these companies risk increased injuries, production failures, penalties for noncompliance, and even lawsuits resulting from employee injury.

Let's look at a typical job site. Perhaps the contractors are working hard and trying to do what's right — but the contractor's idea of what's right might not be in line with your safety requirements. Or perhaps the contractors are trying to find ways to finish the job faster — even if it means ignoring a few safety policies along the way. We're not talking gross negligence here. It could be as simple as a janitor using a strong detergent to clean a floor, but only rinsing the floor once, instead of the three times required for that type of cleanser. If another employee then slips and falls on the slick floor, the hiring company has a safety violation that may stop production, require an investigation, and trigger legal action.

When workers don't follow safety guidelines, injuries are more likely to become an issue, and without enforcement, incidents will continue to escalate, along with risks to the business. To reduce incidents and keep production and workflow moving as planned, it's critical for your contractors and suppliers to understand all policies and follow them exactly as required.

Here are a few best practices to help you educate and enforce.



1

Thoroughly vet your contractors

To help your contractors implement best practices, start by finding out what they know. Begin with a questionnaire to identify specific industry or service capabilities, including skills, training, and the best practices they have in place. Then, by using the information provided in the questionnaire, you can assess whether or not the contractor's capabilities meet your requirements.

Because best practices and standards are not set in stone, it's essential to have safety professionals on your team who constantly review new standards and regulations to make sure you and your contractors are always up to date. Avetta does this and more. In addition to collecting valuable supplier information, Avetta listens to clients and contractors to discover how the regulatory landscape is shifting for industries — and to identify any differences to create the full picture.



2

Use third-party on-site audits to ensure policy enforcement

One of the best ways to make sure that your contractors and suppliers are following required policies is through validated third-party audits. Comprehensive auditing is very hard for organizations to achieve on their own because the process requires considerable skill and manpower. Look for partners that can provide third-party, on-site audits to make sure your contractors and suppliers review the policies, understand them, and abide by all regulations.

In addition to providing professional and thorough on-site audits, Avetta provides a three-year review process that requires contractors to upload documentation verifying that they have adopted and maintain the necessary safety policies, and that they continue to update and review them at least every two or three years.

A contractor is immediately flagged by the Avetta system if they don't review their policies on time, ensuring that you're kept apprised of contractors who are out of compliance. The same process extends to insurance certificates. Avetta requires contractors to upload their insurance documentation so that you can be assured that all insurance coverage is appropriate and maintained.

Always choose the right contractor for the job

With a variety of organizations creating best practices and consensus standards — which often evolve into regulations — it's not always clear which are the most current, which will provide your organization with the greatest value, and what kind of variances may be required to meet your objectives. For example, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) offers 275 codes and standards that affect virtually every building, process, service, design, and installation. The American Petroleum Institute establishes and maintains dozens of standards aimed at enhancing the safety of industry operations, assuring quality and reducing waste.

When there are literally thousands of standards and best practices, it's impossible for organizations to know them all. To make matters worse, there are many legacy standards still around, as well as standards that conflict with each other. If you're trying to manage best practices on your own, it's difficult to know which ones fit your industry. As a result, your business could be mistakenly flagged for failure to comply.

Avetta understands the proliferation of best practices and their failure to perfectly match the requirements of every job. To help contractors who are caught in this situation, Avetta is one of the only contractor management solutions to allow best practice variances. Avetta's solution enables organizations to document why there is a variance so that any flags can be fully understood. In addition, the information can be updated if the situation changes.



Get help finding the right safety standards for your organization

It's important to have the right people available at the right time for the right job. For example, if you need a crane operator, you first want to be certain that the contractor you select has the right training, license, and insurance to operate the crane. Companies actively seek highly rated contractors as their top choice because they know those contractors are well-trained, productive workers who will follow best practices and promote a safe, healthy work environment.

But putting the wrong contractor into the wrong work environment can have lasting impact. It pays to have a contractor management partner that can help you choose the right contractor for the job every time. Avetta allows you to easily access the information you need on every contractor to determine if the supplier has the right qualifications, or whether they present risks to other employees or the company.

Avetta: Your foundation for policy enforcement and best practices

Whether you're interested in improving and maintaining policy enforcement or helping to implement best practices, Avetta is here to simplify the process and ensure that you get the most qualified talent for each engagement. With Avetta, your contractors will be aware of policies and enforcement, and they'll be up to date with the latest best practices, so it's easy to find the right people with the right credentials when you need them.



About Avetta

Avetta connects the world's leading organizations with qualified suppliers, contractors, and vendors. We bring unmatched visibility to your company through cloud-based technology and human insight. As a result, we foster sustainable growth for your business, as well as your supply chain. Our SaaS subscription software is used by 50k+ active customers in over 100 countries.