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Safely Onboarding New Employees in Construction

Working in the construction industry is inherently dangerous; it's standard for employees to work at a height, in a hazardous area or with high-powered equipment. In an industry that exposes even seasoned employees to risk on a daily basis, it's especially important to understand the increased risks to new employees.

New-hire construction workers experience work-related injuries more frequently than any other type of employee. Shockingly, among Pinnacol policyholders, more than 50 percent of workplace injuries involve construction employees who have been on the job less than 12 months. These injuries not only put your newest and most vulnerable employees at risk, but also they can impact the financial stability of your business. In 2018, claims filed for new-hire construction employees cost Colorado businesses $39,745,542.

Since there are a variety of factors that impact new-hire safety in construction (organizational safety culture/climate, past experiences, worker attitudes and project scope), it's essential that you take the time to recognize job site hazards and prepare new-hire employees for all types of work, equipment and risk. Any new employee coming into your organization for the first time will require an introduction to the way your organization values safety and conducts business. Every new hire deserves the opportunity to perform his or her job safely.

There are a few ways to prevent new employees from becoming statistics. Construction organizations should begin by designing an onboarding process for all new hires. The process should include an orientation that continues beyond Day One and includes a verbal check-in with new employees at 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, six months and 12 months after their hire dates. Checking in just once a month can ensure that your employees have the appropriate equipment and the training they need to work safely. This approach will encourage safe attitudes and safe work behaviors, and will prevent injuries on the job site. See the sample check-in checklist at the end of this document.

Management commitment is also critical to safety success. This means that those in positions of leadership should demonstrate a commitment to safety and take an active role to provide the adequate resources, time, personnel and financial support to create safe worksites. Safety measures should be incorporated into the business model to demonstrate that the organization values safety and believes it is as important as production.

$39,745,542

THE COST OF CLAIMS FILED FOR NEW-HIRE CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYEES PAID BY COLORADO BUSINESSES IN 2018

One way to do this is to ensure that communication to new employees comes from management through a written letter or a video, or face-to-face. For example, you can create a written safety policy statement from the owner / president to welcome new hires and express the importance of workplace safety. If you're feeling creative, you can even use your mobile device to create a 30-second video from the owner / president. This approach strengthens your safety message. However you choose to communicate, tell new employees (even if they have years of experience) about your safety expectations so they understand the importance of safety at your organization. This effort can positively influence worker attitudes and behaviors.

Safety training is another way to prevent new-hire injuries. Training is vital for employees who face occupational hazards on the job site, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) even requires it. Make sure safety training for new employees includes how to recognize job site hazards and how to control or eliminate those hazards. Some of the OSHA standards that require training include emergency preparedness, hazard communication, ladders, scaffolds, fall protection and personal protective equipment. Pinnacol also offers complimentary and low-cost in-person and online training to every policyholder.

Now that we've gone over how to begin developing an onboarding process, don't forget that managing new-hire risk begins before you actually hire your employee. In addition to development of an onboarding process, selective screening tools can be used to minimize the chances of hiring someone who is not a good fit for the organization. These screening tools may be conducted during the pre-employment or post-offer application process. Note that you should always check with your employment law representative prior to implementing screening options. Some pre-employment screening options include:

- References.
- Credit scores.
- Criminal records.
- Drug and alcohol screens.
- Education verifications.
- Re-employment verifications.
- E-Verify.
- Integrity testing.
- Motor vehicle records.
- Name and address verifications.
- Professional certification verifications.
- Sex offender registries.
- Social Security validations.
- Workers' compensation history.

If you'd like more information, please contact us on our Safety On Call line at 303.361.4700. Our safety consultants are available Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., and can address all your safety-related questions and concerns.

Injuries Experienced by Employees in the Construction Industry From 2015 to 2018

Take a look at the snapshot of the claims reported in the construction industry for workers employed zero to 12 months. Trends show an increasing number of claims experienced by construction new hires as compared to the general industry.

How does your organization look compared with the rest of the construction industry in Colorado?

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY NEW EMPLOYEES 2015-2018

ON THE JOB
12 MONTHS OR LESS

NUMBER OF CLAIMS
15,381

CLAIMS COST
$210,791,958

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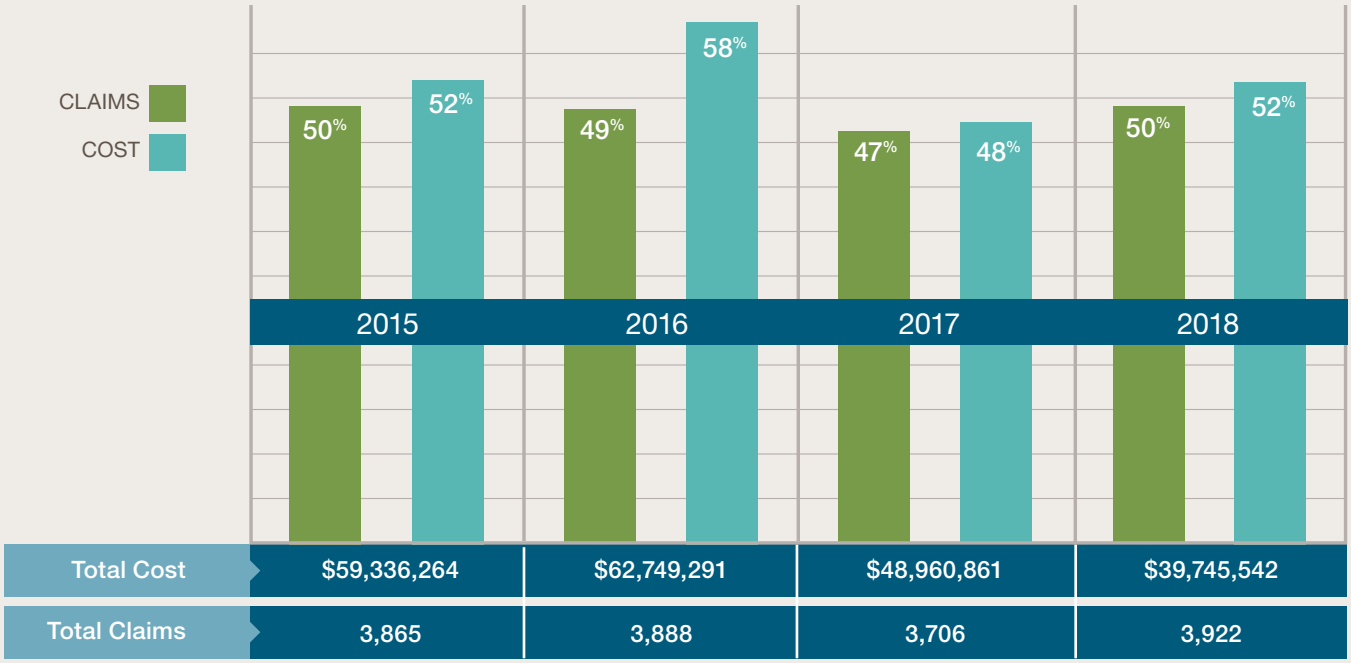
Claims Experienced by Workers on the Job Less Than 12 Months

This chart shows the cost and the number of claims experienced by new hires (on the job less than a year) as compared to total claims in the construction industry.

Of all Pinnacol construction claims, new-hire claims account for more than half of the total number of construction claims filed. For example, in 2015, new-hire claims accounted for 52% of the total claims cost and 50% of the total claims filed.



Elements to Your Onboarding Process

BASIC ONBOARDING FLOW CHART

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Sample New Employee Safety Checklist

THE NEW EMPLOYEE AND HIS/HER SUPERVISOR MUST INITIAL THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

Day 1

		Employee	Supervisor
1	**Introduction to Organization** – President/owner has described organizational safety through video, in-person greeting or written welcome letter.		
2	**Safety Climate** – I have read and someone has explained to me the organization's safety policy.		
3	**Personal Accountability** – I understand how my actions can impact safety goals.		
4	**Tour Facility** – I have learned where the equipment and materials are stored, and the location of bathrooms and the organization's offices.		
5	**Human Resources Programs/Policies** – I reviewed claims management processes, filing a work-related claim, accident investigations and designated medical providers.		
6	**Safety Program** – I understand the roles and responsibilities of the organization's safety coordinator/committee.		
7	**Safety Program** – I have read and someone has explained to me the safety rules for the organization and any rules specific to my job position.		
8	**Drug and Alcohol Policy** – I understand the organization's policy on drugs and alcohol.		
9	**Organization-Specific Safety Training** – This is a list of training that should be provided to your new employee. Even if the employee is experienced, be sure that the training is adequate and that the employee is competent in the task. Contact your Pinnacol Assurance Safety Consultant for complimentary training courses.		

10	Fall protection			17	Cranes		
11	Electrical safety			18	Scaffolding		
12	Lockout/tagout			19	Trenching and excavations		
13	Ladders			20	Environmental hazards		
14	Scissor lifts (powered mobile scaffolds)			21	Defensive driving and vehicle operational permissions		
15	Aerial work platforms (boom lifts)			22	Equipment-specific safety rules		
16	Forklifts			23	Other hazard-specific topics unique to the organization		

24	**Safety Program Enforcement** – The organization disciplinary policies have been explained to me.		
25	**Emergency Response** – I have reviewed the plan for the office and the job site.		
26	**Emergency Response** – I have received and understand the procedures in case of emergency involving fire and understand the organization's fire prevention plan.		
27	**Injury Reporting** – I have read and signed the New-Employee Designated Provider Notification Letter and understand I must report all injuries to my supervisor immediately.		
28	**First Aid** – I know where the first aid station and kits are located.		

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29	**Hazard Communication** – I understand the purpose of hazard communication and know the location of the safety data sheets (SDSs).		
30	**Job Hazard Analysis** –I have reviewed JHAs for task-specific safety.		
31	**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – I have been issued and trained on the proper use of the following equipment:		

32	Hard hat		
33	Safety glasses		
34	Fall protection / full-body harness		
35	Gloves		

36	Reflective outerwear or high-visibility vest (if applicable)		
37	Hearing protection (if applicable)		
38	Respirator (if applicable)		

39	**Confirm** – A quiz or test was used to affirm orientation comprehension.		

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE

EMPLOYEE'S PRINTED NAME

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE

SUPERVISOR'S PRINTED NAME

DATE

Safety Check-in

Use this to perform a standardized, subsequent safety check-in at 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, six months and 12 months after employees' start dates. This will take only 10-15 minutes of your time, and it will help your employees work safer and let them know they are valued and cared about.

1. **Organization Climate Check –** Verify safety expectations and knowledge retention and application of organization-specific safety rules by using this simple checklist to document the safety check-in meeting.

2. **Skills Check –** Verify ability to perform work safely, including equipment operation.

3. **On-the-Job Training –** Ensure that supervisors coach and mentor new employees and demonstrate safe work practices; also ensure that they lead by example.

4. At 12 months, include a reflection on the past year of employment:

Have there been any safety rule violations?

Have there been any near misses?

What is the safety attitude of the employee?

CHECK-IN

		Yes	No
1	I have the personal protective equipment I need to perform the work safely.		
2	I have the safety training I need to get my job done.		
3	I know what to do in case of an emergency.		
4	I know where to go if I have a workplace injury.		
5	Safety meetings are conducted with the work crew.		
6	I understand the drug and alcohol policy.		
7	I understand the importance of correctly using tools and equipment.		
8	I am aware of workplace fall hazards and am always protected when working at heights.		
9	Hand and power tools are in good working condition.		
10	My supervisor cares about the safety and health of the work crew.		
	Other notes about our safety discussion:		

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE

EMPLOYEE'S PRINTED NAME

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE

SUPERVISOR'S PRINTED NAME

DATE

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Sample Employee Safety Orientation Quiz

Use this to evaluate and understand your employees' safety comprehension.

NAME DATE ORGANIZATION JOB TITLE

Circle the best answer for the following questions related to the safety orientation presentation.

1. [Enter organization name] believes that _____ are our most important asset.

a) Tools
b) Vans
c) People
d) Financials

2. What are four key elements of an effective safety program?

a) Rewards, personal protective equipment, employees and SDSs
b) SDSs, safety program, rewards and management commitment
c) Management commitment, employee involvement, hazard analysis and safety training
d) Safety training, management commitment and employee involvement

3. Hazard communication, or HAZCOM, provides information to the employee via _____.

a) Safety meetings
b) SDSs
c) Labels
d) Audible alarms

4. Each employee at [Enter organization name] is equally empowered with ____ ____ ____.

a) Stop work authority
b) Lockout/tagout training
c) Reasonable safety training
d) Competent person authority

5. Which employees are required to comply with, for example, OSHA, NFPA 70e and EM-385-1-1 standards?

a) A reasonable number
b) Most
c) All
d) Journeymen

6. Safety training is required for which pieces of equipment?

a) Scissor lift, boom lift, forklift
b) Industry-specific equipment
c) Power tools and equipment
d) Any piece of equipment that I have never used before

7. [Enter organization name] has a written safety enforcement policy.

a) True
b) False

8. Every employee is required to participate in the _____ safety meeting.

a) Weekly
b) Daily
c) Hourly
d) Important

9. Housekeeping is the responsibility of _____.

a) Everyone
b) Superintendents
c) Management
d) Laborers

10. Personal protective equipment shall be donned _____.

a) When it's convenient
b) At all times
c) By apprentices only
d) By laborers only

11. Fall protection must be used anytime a [Enter organization name] employee is at a height ____ above a lower level.

a) 3'
b) 5'
c) 6'
d) 2'

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12. Lockout/tagout shall be used whenever I _____.

a) Need to take a break

b) Don't have black tape

c) Need to control hazardous energy sources

d) Lockout/tagout is not required

13. Ladders are to be utilized according to the ____ specifications.

a) Manufacturer's

b) Builder's

c) Owner's

d) Superintendent's

14. When using an "A" frame self-supporting stepladder, I may use the last ladder rung to stand on.

a) True

b) False

15. Defective hand and power tools shall be ____ _____ _____ ____ ____.

a) Shown to the competent person

b) Tagged "Do not use" and removed from service

c) Shown to the superintendent on-site

d) Used until the tool breaks

16. Generally, excavations that are deeper than ____ feet shall be sloped, benched or shored to protect workers from cave-ins.

b) 2

c) 4

a) 3

d) 5

17. Confined spaces are found in the following locations: _____.

a) Vaults/manholes

b) Tunnels

c) Attics

d) All of the above

18. Asbestos and silica are most dangerous when _____.

a) Hot

b) Airborne

c) Wet

d) Sealed

19. The standard evacuation plan for [Enter organization name] are the following two locations: _____.

a)

b)

20. In the event of an injury, a First Report of Injury Report shall be completed and returned to my supervisor.

a) True

b) False

21. [Enter organization name] requires that all injuries be reported.

a) True

b) False

22. In the event of a work-related injury, the employee shall seek medical attention only from a _____ _____ _____.

a) Plan provider professional

b) Designated medical provider

c) General hospital procedure

d) Tell supervisor method

23. [Enter organization name] desires all employees to return to work as soon as possible after a work-related injury. That is why [Enter organization name] uses a _____ _____ program.

a) Catch release

b) Quick pick

c) Modified duty

d) News flash

24. Any employee using a scissor lift, boom lift or forklift shall be _____.

a) Informed

b) Nullified

c) Trained

d) Reckless

25. [Enter organization name] requires a team lift for any equipment exceeding [enter weight] lbs.

a) True

b) False

26. When lifting heavy objects, the strong muscles of the back should be used and the object should be held as far away from the body as possible.

a) True

b) False

Quiz Answer Key

1.	C	14.	B
2.	C	15.	B
3.	B	16.	D
4.	A	17.	D
5.	C	18.	B
6.	D	19.	Company-specific
7.	A	20.	A
8.	A	21.	C
9.	A	22.	B
10.	B	23.	C
11.	C	24.	C
12.	C	25.	A
13.	A	26.	B

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