

New Employee Risks: Manage New Hires with Strategic Efforts

Why New Hires Matter: First Year Injury Risk

Employees new to a job have an elevated risk of injury, driven by factors such as unfamiliarity with tasks, environments, expectations and critical safety controls.

A structured approach to onboarding, supervision, mentoring and follow-up can help employers better manage first-year worker risk and reduce the potential for serious injuries and fatalities.



Who Are “New Workers”?

“New hire” risk extends beyond brand new employees. Consider these groups when evaluating exposure:

- **First time employees** - Individuals new to the workforce or new to high risk work.
- **Employees new to the company** - While these individuals may be experienced workers, it is likely they’re unfamiliar with your organization’s specific processes, equipment or culture.
- **Employees new to the task or role** - This includes currently employed individuals who are new to a job or task within your organization due to job changes or promotions.
- **Seasonal, temporary or contract workers** - Often onboarded quickly with limited training time.
- **Returning employees** - Workers returning after extended leave, injury or a long gap between projects.



Priority Focus Areas for New Hire Safety

1. Structured New Employee Orientation (NEO)

- Standardize onboarding for all new and transitioning workers.
- Reinforce expectations around safety, reporting and stop work authority.
- Avoid “one and done” orientation, build in reinforcement.

2. Competency & Certification Verification

- Confirm required certifications, licenses and authorizations.
- Validate competency through demonstration, not assumption.

3. Task Specific & Critical Risk Training

- Focus training on highest severity exposures, not just frequency.
- Ensure workers understand:
 - What can seriously hurt or kill them
 - What controls prevent those outcomes
 - What to do when controls are missing or fail

4. Supervision & Mentorship

- Pair new workers with experienced mentors or buddies.
- Increase supervision during early tenure and unfamiliar tasks.
- Encourage questions and normalize speaking up.

5. Ongoing Check Ins During the First Year

- Conduct regular safety check ins at:
 - 30 / 60 / 90 days
 - Whenever projects, tasks or roles change
- Use near misses and observations as learning opportunities.

Supervisor Checklist: Managing First Year Worker Safety

Use this checklist to ensure your new workers' needs are addressed throughout their first 90-days:

Phase 1: Pre-Start & Orientation

Consider these elements before the worker sets foot on site:

Action	✓
Confirm the role, the assigned tasks and the worker's actual experience level meet the needs of the position they're hired for	
Confirm the worker can perform the job as described, including physical and intellectual demands	
Verify any required training, certifications, and authorizations are completed & up-to-date	
Set safety expectations, reporting duties, and stop-work authority. Ensure new hire understands these processes.	
Deliver a site-specific safety meeting for the project the new hire is assigned to, not just basic orientation	
Designate and identify the person the worker reports to and whom they go to with questions while onsite. Make sure this person is in the same operational location as the new worker	

Phase 2: Week 1 Training & Mentoring

Take measurable steps to build capability before complete independence:

Action	✓
Deliver task-specific training for each new task the worker is presented with.	
Formally assign a buddy or mentor. This person should be designated and introduced and remain their mentor/buddy for a minimum of 90-days.	
Brief the mentor their coaching role, and reassure they're protected from production pressures	
Ensure mentor or supervisor completes a daily check-in with the worker, every day of their first week	
Observe a task demonstration before any independent work	
Validate the worker's competency by demonstration, not by assumption or sign-off sheet	
Review new worker's crew assignment to ensure they're paired with experienced peers	

Phase 3: Supervised Work & Gradual Integration

Integrate these steps throughout the next 8-90 days. Set pace according to the knowledge and skills of the new hire:

Action	✓
Increase supervision on new, unfamiliar or high-risk tasks	
Release exposure to higher-risk work gradually, not all at once	
Release oversight based on demonstrated capability, not the calendar	
Reinforce safe behaviors and correct issues in the moment	
Implement structured safety check-ins to ensure the new worker can identify hazards and corrective actions, utilizes proper safety procedures and follows outlined protocol appropriately. Correct as needed until this skill is sufficient.	
Revisit this checklist on any task, role, crew or site change	
Review near misses and observations with the worker as learning, not discipline	

New-Hire Red Flags to Watch For

- Reluctance to speak up, ask questions or raise a concern
- Inconsistent PPE use or a drift away from written/spoken procedures
- Rushing to “keep up” with experienced workers
- Performing tasks outside original training or assignment
- Overconfidence, such as moving too fast for a task or skipping steps
- Crews equipped with more new hires than seasoned workers

Supervisor Reminder

The 90-day mark is a milestone, not a finish line. Continue check-ins at six months and one year and treat the full first year as an elevated-risk period. First year employees, regardless of prior experience, are in a high risk phase. Consistent supervision, reinforcement, and mentoring are key controls for preventing serious injuries and fatalities.

Organizations that effectively manage new-hire risk treat the first year as a high-risk phase rather than a formality. **Addressing new hire safety risks proactively is not just an onboarding checklist; it’s a serious injury and fatality prevention strategy.**



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