

Prime contractor role and responsibilities

The prime contractor plays a key role in workplace health and safety. This role involves coordinating the health and safety activities of employers. It also involves putting in place and maintaining a system that ensures all employers comply with their health and safety responsibilities.

The prime contractor should know the work activities and hazards at the workplace, as well as how to ensure risks are controlled effectively.

This document outlines the role and responsibilities of the prime contractor.

Have a written agreement

At a multiple-employer workplace, it's essential to have a written, signed agreement in which the owner of the workplace designates a prime contractor. Without this written agreement, the owner is the prime contractor. (The owner can be the property owner, a tenant, a property manager, or an agent of the owner.)

Misunderstandings can occur when safety roles and responsibilities are unclear. Verbal agreements about who is the prime contractor are not valid. They can lead to confusion and compromise worker safety.

Coordinate health and safety activities and ensure compliance

Where workers of two or more employers are working at the same time (a multiple-employer workplace), the prime contractor is responsible for:

- Coordinating the health and safety activities of employers (subcontractors).
- Putting in place and maintaining a system to ensure site-wide compliance with health and safety requirements. The system may include elements such as:
 - Site orientations
 - Worker training
 - Hazard identification and risk management
 - Safety meetings
 - Inspections
 - First aid assessment and first aid services
 - An emergency response plan
 - Incident reporting and investigation

Communicate and coordinate with employers

The prime contractor communicates and coordinates with employers by:

- Conducting pre-planning meetings and attending site meetings with employers
- Having each employer provide the names of their designated supervisors

In some sectors (e.g., construction, oil and gas), the prime contractor must also:

- Have each employer provide the name of the qualified person who is responsible for the employer's site health and safety activities.
- Ensure employers notify the prime contractor before any work that is likely to create a hazard for workers of another employer.
- Let employers and workers know about workplace hazards that could affect them.
- Appoint a qualified coordinator to ensure coordination of health and safety activities for the worksite.

Maintain accurate records

Clear and accurate documentation helps prime contractors show they are fulfilling their responsibilities. Examples of documentation include:

- Risk assessment and control measures documentation
- Safety meeting records
- Site and equipment inspection reports
- Incident investigation and corrective action reports
- First aid records
- Worker orientation and training records

Key regulatory references

- *Workers Compensation Act*, [section 13](#) (definitions of “prime contractor,” “owner,” “employer,” and “multiple-employer workplace”)
- *Workers Compensation Act*, [section 24](#) (prime contractor responsibilities at multiple-employer workplaces)
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, [section 3.20](#) (first aid responsibilities at multiple-employer workplaces)
- Occupational Health and Safety Policies, [item P2-24-1](#) (what qualifies as a multiple-employer workplace)