

WORKING Well with Others

Being aware of your surroundings goes a long way in making
your job site a safer place to work for all.

BY JASON FARRIS

SAFETY IS AN ENDLESS JOB.

And this is partially due to the fact that it's not all about you.

When you have done what you can to keep yourself and your co-workers safe on a job site, the job continues as you also need to pay attention to what other workers in your vicinity are doing. And in turn, they have to be aware of what you and your crew are doing. Planning and communication are essential for safe work in the vicinity of other trades. Below is some practical advice that can make for a safer, more productive job site.

Controlling the work area. There are so many situations you can get into when working around other trades, so you really have to be able to assess each situation and try to handle it in a way that is beneficial for everyone on site.

One of the most important actions to take is to establish your work area with barricades and enforce them. Once your boundaries are established, others are expected to remain outside that area unless they have a reason to be in it. For example, when others have to be inside Cooper Steel's work area on a job site, they are told what is going on around them and about the potential hazards of being in our area. In addition, our erection crew is made aware other crews are in our work area. Absolutely no one is permitted to work under the swing path of the crane, the raising gang, under areas where decking is being spread and welded or shot down or directly under crews that are detailing.

Of course, you will have the occasional wanderer that will just walk right in under your area of operation. It's our practice to come to a safe and immediate stop, explain the significance of the barricades and ask the person to move outside of the active erection area and then continue with erection when the area is safe again. In addition, while establishing and enforcing your work boundaries is important, it is just as important for you to continuously adjust your barricades so that other trades can complete their work. Strive to complete your work in each area as you progress so you will not have to return to the area when all other trades have started their work there. And do your best to establish good working relationships with every-

one on the site. Besides the countless other benefits of having a good on-site relationship, this creates an environment where all teams are looking out for the safety of one another.

Avoiding hazards. Keep an eye out for hazards such as flammables under welding operations or objects that could prevent fall protection from working properly. If most of your work is done at heights, other trades may move in materials or equipment that may hinder your workers' fall protection. For instance, if someone parks a forklift underneath your work area, will your employees' fall protection device stop them before they impact that equipment? (Keep this in mind when placing your own equipment and materials as well.) Another thing to watch for: materials left in the area by other trades that could cause fire hazards (i.e., concrete forms, boxes, trash cans, fuel cans, etc.). Good housekeeping by all trades is a must for a safe job site. It's a matter of working with each other and not against each other.

Anticipating site changes. It is also helpful to observe activities in the direction that steel erection is advancing. Job sites evolve throughout the project. Watch for trenches being excavated in areas where you will be using a crane, forklift or aerial lifts. When these trenches are filled, they will most likely not have the bearing capacity they did before and may not support the weight of your equipment, which could cause aerial lifts, forklifts and even cranes to tip over.

Watching for unstable structural assemblies or materials. Masonry walls, tilt panels and precast panels that have not been yet connected to the structure should have a boundary established around them to prevent injury from collapse. Workers should stay outside those boundaries until the wall is adequately braced. When staging your materials, take care if they are in close proximity to the wall braces. If a stack of beams accidentally gets knocked over close to the braces, it could result in the wall collapsing—and most likely the wall will be falling towards your workers. A good rule of thumb is to set stacks of material no closer than two times the height of the stack away from the braces or farther if it is feasible.



Keeping cranes contained. Another situation you may find yourself in is having another crane working in close proximity to your own crane. Again, this is a situation where good working relationships are key. If the two cranes are within each other's swing paths, there are certain procedures from OSHA that must be followed. OSHA Regulation 1926.1424(b) reads: "Where any part of a crane/derrick is within the working radius of another crane/derrick, the controlling entity must institute a system to coordinate operations. If there is no controlling entity, the employer (if there is only one employer operating the multiple pieces of equipment) or employers must institute such a system. The best practice is for the two crane operators to be in constant contact with each other."

Avoiding dust clouds. Concrete cutting and other abrasive operations can cause a dust cloud, which may have toxic constituents such as silica. While the mason's workers may have respiratory protection, not everyone else might. We tell our workers to stay away from that work, upwind and out of the dust plume. We know of at least one instance where the contractor agreed to move his masonry cutting operation away from the erector's access path to prevent exposure to this hazard.

Maintaining your guardrail system. If you are required to install a temporary cable guardrail system around unprotected edges or openings, you must maintain this system daily. Be sure that the cables are tight enough to comply with the proper deflection as prescribed by OSHA. Remember: If you install the system you are responsible for it until you remove it or turn it over in writing to another party. Be sure the accepting party inspects the entire system and accepts its condition in writing before turning over responsibility.

Clearly the planning and protection you provide for your own workforce is a large task—but even when you've got a good handle on your own safety practices, you still need to consider other trades working with you. But with all teams thinking about not only their own safety but also the safety of others, a construction project is that much more productive. ■

- ▲ Control your work area—especially in bad weather.
- ▼ Clash of the cranes! (Not really, but good working relationships are key when multiple cranes need to operate in close proximity to one another.)



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