



Safety Action Guide for Small Construction Companies

The Bottom Line

Small firms (under 20 employees) account for half of all construction fatalities. The problem isn't that owners don't care — they do. The problem is that good intentions don't automatically reach the field. These actions will.

3 Things Impacting Safety on Your Jobs Right Now

1. No one person owns safety on each job — "everyone is responsible" means no one is
2. Safety communication stops after the morning meeting — PPE goes on when asked, comes right back off
3. Schedule pressure wins — when things get tight, safety setup is the first thing cut

What To Do About It

COORDINATE — Own it

- ✓ Name one person responsible for safety on each active project
- ✓ Ask subcontractors about their safety record before you hire them — treat it like cost and schedule
- ✓ Put PPE rules and stop-work rights in every subcontractor contract
- ✓ Add a safety update to your weekly owner-PM check-in

COMMUNICATE — Make safety visible and make it stick

- ✓ Open every site meeting with one specific hazard tied to that day's work
- ✓ Brief every new subcontractor crew in person when they arrive — not a sign, not a contract
- ✓ Stage PPE at the work location, not in the van
- ✓ Do at least one unannounced site visit per project per week
- ✓ Wear your PPE on every site visit — workers follow what you do, not what you say

INSULATE — Protect safety from schedule pressure

- ✓ Build safety setup time into your estimates — if it's not in the schedule, it won't happen
- ✓ Tell your crew directly: speed is not the goal
- ✓ Make stop-work an expectation for everyone, not just a permission slip for a few.
- ✓ Never cut safety corners to stay on schedule

Your 5-Minute Safety Action List

Action	When	Who
Build safety setup time into estimates	At bidding stage	Owner / Estimator
Name a safety contact for each active project	Start of every job	Owner
Open every site meeting with one specific hazard	Daily	Owner / PM / Lead
Brief subcontractor crews in person on arrival	Every new crew	Owner / Superintendent
Stage PPE at the work location before work starts	Start of each task	Crew Lead
Do one unannounced site visit per project per week	Weekly	Owner / Safety Manager
Add safety status to owner-PM check-ins	Weekly	Owner / PM

 **Source:** These recommendations are drawn from "Best Safety Practices Based on the Nature and Stresses of Small Construction Businesses," a research project funded by the Jobsite Safety Institute (JSI) and conducted by the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. View the full report at jssafety.org.