

HEALTH & SAFETY MANAGING CONTRACTORS IN THE QUARRY INDUSTRY

Introduction

The term “Contractor” refers to any individual or organisation who enters into an agreement (either written or orally) with a Company to carry out services. There is a continual trend towards increasing the use of contractors in the quarrying industry in SA and the activities carried out by contractors are no longer restricted to those of the “specialist” and now include routine quarrying activities such as drilling, blasting, etc.

Contracts in the quarrying industry can be classified as follows:

Major Contract	Contracts involving very large expenditure and a long period on site. Examples include haulage contracts and plant operation.
Medium/minor contracts	Contracts with substantial expenditure. Examples include construction projects.
Casual Contracts	Contracts involving low expenditure over short periods.
Labour hire contracts	Labour hire only with principle organising and managing the work task. Examples include maintenance labour for shut downs.
Restricted site access	Access to site is brief and restricted. Examples include visitors, deliveries, office equipment repairers etc.

With respect to contractors, a company’s time and resources are frequently allocated in proportion to the size of the contract. Therefore major and medium size contracts use formal contractual documentation and processes are more detailed and thorough. Minor contracts and casual contracts are generally less well controlled with perceived bureaucratic procedures and processes being avoided. Consequently occupational health and safety issues may require more vigilance with relatively minor contracts.

The majority of the following measures are either explicit or implicit requirements of current legislation. They are essential for all contractor operations regardless of the size of the contract.

The Quarry/Contractor Relationship

Whilst the use of contractors provides the Quarry Industry with advantages such as flexibility, fixed costs etc., the health and safety implications for a Company using contractors are just as onerous as for those applying to its own employees. Responsibilities when employing the contractor are set out below. In SA in terms of the law, Contractors are viewed as “employees” on a quarry operation.

Duty

All companies have a duty under the Mine Health and Safety Act to take all reasonable practicable steps to ensure the health and safety of:

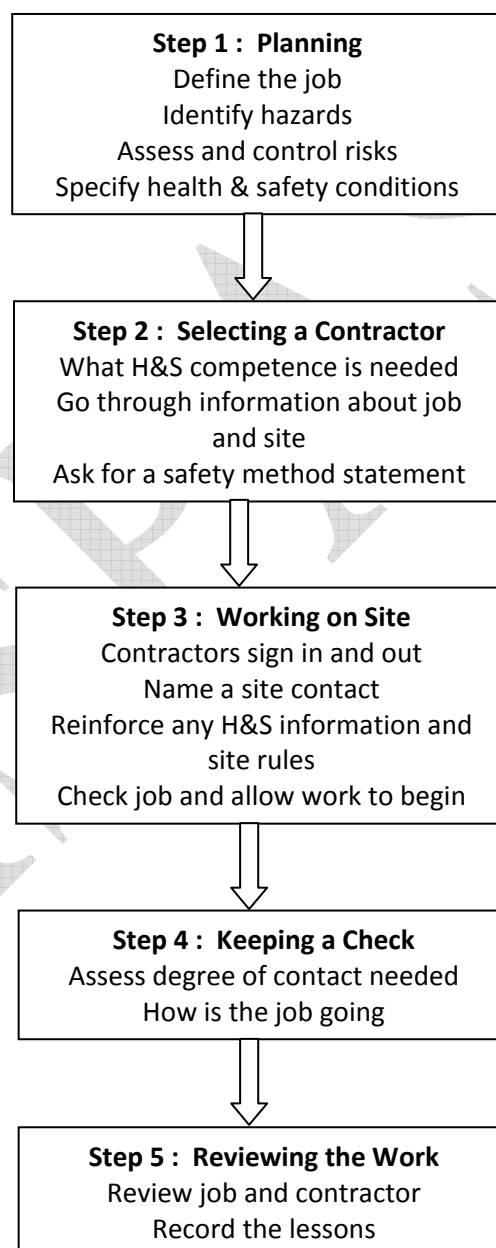
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- Their employees (contractors included under this definition)
- Other people at work on the site, such as contractors
- Members of the public who may be affected by the work.

As a company, the Contractor also has a duty to ensure the safety, health and welfare of his employees and others who may be affected, wherever they may work. They must provide a safe place of work and a safe system of work on client's premises just as they are obliged to on their own premises.

Managing the Health and Safety of Contractors

Five steps to managing the health and safety of contractors is given in the following diagram:



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Planning

The first step is to plan what the contractor's job involves and how it can be done safely. After defining the scope of work, a risk assessment should be carried out to identify any significant potential hazards to safety and health. Following this, the company should develop a bid list through a formal or informal pre-qualification process which includes the scope of work, the risk assessment and other tendering information. Contractors also have responsibility to carry out a risk assessment and should do so before work commences at the tender stage.

In order to be satisfied as to the competency of the contractor in the management of health and safety, it is common for companies to send out or use a pre-qualification check list at the tending stage. A list of the minimum health and safety requirements for small contractors that could be used as the basis of such a checklist is as follows: (See next page)

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Contractors Checklist for Small Contracts (Minimum Requirements)

Health & Safety Policy

- A safety and health Policy with clearly stated objectives, signed by the Managing Director (or equivalent) and dated.

Responsibility and Accountability

- A documented risk assessment and safe system of work for the task in question.
- A documented programme for regular inspections of all plant and equipment.
- A documented process to inform employees of changes to legislation, codes of practices, standards, etc.

Induction and Training

- A record of each employee's induction training, ongoing training and health surveillance.

PPE

- Availability of all necessary forms of PPE
- Evidence that persons have been instructed in the correct usage and maintenance of the same
- Documented procedure for the regular inspection of equipment and its replacement when necessary

Hazardous Materials

- A documented COSHH assessment for hazardous substances brought onto site

Incident Reporting and Investigation

- A documented procedure for the reporting of all accidents, incidents and near misses, as required by the company.
- An ongoing record of all accidents, incidents and near-misses.

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Selecting a Contractor

Once tenders have been received they should be evaluated to establish whether the contractor has:

- An appropriate health and safety management system (such as policies, procedures and practices) that are in keeping with the task in question and the standards set by the employing Company and legislation.
- The resources necessary and available to implement that management system on site.
- Carried out a risk assessment and documented a safe system of work.
- A good record of occupational health and safety performance in work of a similar nature.

Some companies may have a list of “approved contractors” who meet all the requirements listed above which are re-assessed on an annual basis, rather than before each particular job.

Working on Site

Once a contractor commences work on site it is important that they are aware of the site safety rules that apply to them and any particular hazards that they face. It is good practice to:

- Control the coming and going of contractors in and out of the premises.
- Provide induction on the site conditions, facilities, safety rules and practices required.
- Name a site contact (someone to get in touch with on a routine basis or if the jobs changes and there is uncertainty about what to do). This person should be somebody nominated who is in a managerial position with sufficient authority and competence (such as the production, operation or safety manager on site). This person should go through the job with the contractor to ensure that all necessary controls are in place (such as permits to works, PPE, procedures, etc).
- Establish a timetable for formal and regular review of the contractor’s safety management system through inspections, audits and safety meetings.

Keeping a check

Having established a timetable for over-inspections and audits of the contractor’s health and safety management system it is important that this is undertaken in order to ascertain how the job is going, in particular:

- Is it going as planned?
- Are the contractor’s health and safety systems actually in place and are they being followed?
Are they working safely?
- Have there been any incidents?
- Are any other special arrangements necessary?

Such inspections and audits should also be undertaken regularly on the company’s own health and safety systems in line with the management system model.

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Reviewing the work

Once the job has been completed it is necessary to review the job. Reviewing is about evaluating the quality of the work against both the job and the contractor's performance. One reason for this is to learn what will be done differently next time in order to:

- Review the outcomes of procedures in place
- Amend or add to the procedures if necessary
- Record and rate the overall performance of the contractor against established criteria.
- Provide feedback to contractor.

In Conclusion

Aspasa has developed a contractor guideline which is available on this website.

If there are issues members need advise on, please contact Aspasa.

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30 SEPTEMBER 2009