

Site Rules for Subs

by Denise David Baer

A bustling job site is like a hive of bees, with one important difference: Bees know instinctively what their jobs are; humans, on the other hand, need to be taught what to do and what's expected of them. There's no shame in that. In fact, it shows that our actions are not a product of base instinct, but rather a creation of free will.

That being the case, however, I don't want everyone else's free will running roughshod over our project schedules, our profits, or our reputation. In the past, we've had our fair share of employees and subcontractors who didn't show up on the job when they were scheduled, who showed little concern for leaving debris on the job site, or who damaged a client's property. One client made a point of telling us that he had overheard some pretty offensive language from the crew, and a female client mentioned to me, woman to woman, that one male worker in particular made her feel uncomfortable because of his long, unkempt hair and rough appearance.

Nowadays, we educate our employees from the day they're hired about our expectations for work performance, safety, personal conduct, and customer relations. Our Employee Manual spells out exactly what we will not tolerate.

Educating subs. But what about our subs and their employees? Contractors work hard to make sure everyone on the job is working from the same set of drawings, but rarely do anything to make sure everyone is working to the same set of professional standards.

Our solution is to provide our subs with a one-page list of Site Rules (at right) that spells out exactly what we expect from them. We mail a copy of

SITE RULES

1. No one is permitted to work on the site without proof of current insurance coverage, a completed W-9 form, and Independent Contractor Statement (when necessary). No payments will be issued before receipt of all required forms, including Stipulation Against Liens when required.
2. You must sign in daily at the job site. If you have several workers on the site, assign one person to sign in, but please indicate how many workers are on the site.
3. Profanity, unprofessional behavior, and unkempt appearances will NOT be tolerated.
4. Everyone is required to use personal protection devices (PPDs) as required by the work being performed. Each job site is stocked with a small supply of safety eyewear, ear plugs, and dust masks. (Safety eyewear must be returned in usable condition or you will be billed for it).
5. If you suffer a work-related injury, report it to your employer AND to our project supervisor immediately.
6. All materials and tools must be kept in a safe and orderly fashion. If your work area or work habits become a hazard to you and/or others, you will be directed to clean up your work area immediately and/or correct your method of working. If you think someone is creating a safety hazard, report it to the supervisor immediately.
7. There normally is minimal storage space available on the job site for tools and materials. Do NOT bring more than necessary to the job site.
8. You are responsible for removing and placing in storage all fixtures relevant to your portion of the project, and to protect them from damage.
9. Smoking is NOT permitted in or near the job site. Smoking is allowed in designated areas only, and all butts will be disposed of in butt cans. Grounds cleanup will be done either on your own time at your own expense or at our expense chargeable to you at \$35/hr.
10. Trash containers will be provided for proper disposal of food debris. Grounds cleanup will be done either on your own time at your own expense or at our expense chargeable to you at \$35/hr.
11. Clean up and remove all your construction debris on a daily basis. If we must remove your construction debris, you will be charged the dump fees plus our labor at \$35/hr. Check with the job supervisor to find out if a dumpster is available for your use.
12. Everyone is responsible for protecting the homeowner's property as well as the work of other trades. Any damage should be reported immediately to the supervisor.
13. Please take all necessary precautions to protect any landscaping around the property. If you think certain plantings may get damaged, report it to the supervisor so that he can make arrangements to protect or remove the plantings.
14. Phone and fax facilities are available for your use. If you use them, you must fill out the required information on our posted phone/fax log sheet. You will be charged for any toll calls placed by you or your employees.

This one-page list of rules is mailed to each sub prior to the start of work. A copy is also posted prominently at each site.

our Site Rules along with a cover letter to the office of each new subcontractor prior to job start. We also post a copy of these rules at each larger job site, and hand out copies to any new workers on the project.

Tough love. Because we vigorously defend our reputation, we deal swiftly with infractions. For small goof-ups, we give our subs a second chance. For example, say someone smacks his thumb with a hammer, and blood and cuss words go flying. If the client is home and overhears the commotion, the offender tenders his apologies immediately.

We do not, however, tolerate intentional or blatant infractions of the rules. If someone blatantly ignores safety issues or habitually uses foul language — or worse yet, directs profanity at a client — that person is sent off the job site, immediately and permanently, with no chances for apologies.

The Reasons Behind the Rules

Every item in the Site Rules list is there for a reason. Aside from those that address administrative issues (Rules 1 and 2), all of the rules are based on just three basic themes: respect for others and their property; safety; and keeping the project on schedule.

Rule 3, for example, recognizes that elderly people and women tend to feel uncomfortable when rough-looking men are working inside their homes. We want our clients to feel comfortable and safe around our workers. Rule 4 makes it clear that safety equipment is to be used to prevent injuries, not simply to cover our backside should the OSHA agent show up on site. An injury-free project runs on schedule, which translates into profit. Rule 5 ensures that we are made aware of every accident so that our job supervisor can follow up with a brief phone call to the injured person's employer (the subcontractor). We ask if the employee is okay and if the sub needs any more information about the incident, and we find out if the injury will

affect the sub's schedule.

All of our Site Rules show concern for others while at the same time enabling us to continually monitor and control our schedule. And that's important to our bottom line, since our slim profit margins will disappear altogether if a job falls behind schedule.

Site Storage

Rules 6 and 7 both deal with material and equipment storage problems. An uncluttered site is not only safer for all concerned, it makes a good impression on our clients. Rule 7 also recognizes that it costs money to move materials from one spot to another each time a new trade needs to get into a particular area to work.

Rule 8 applies to almost any project, but especially to the type of restoration and renovation we do. Our projects often require the temporary removal of historic or otherwise valuable fixtures (lighting fixtures, Victorian-era tubs and lavs, fireplace surrounds, moldings, and so on). If the sub's contract requires that he remove, refurbish, and re-install an item, then we want the sub to be responsible for that item every step of the way. If something's lost or damaged, we know who to call.

Clean Up and Trash Disposal

Rule 9 forbids smoking because of something Gary experienced years ago while working for another contractor. An employee had a habit of laying his smoldering cigarette on the edge of the nearest flat surface between puffs. Inevitably, he forgot about it once and left a burn mark in a countertop. The contractor had to replace the whole thing at considerable cost in time and money.

We also have a reputation for sparkling clean work sites at job completion, including the grounds outside the house. There's nothing that ticks us off more than having to police the grounds for cigarette or cigar butts, lunch wrappers, and foam coffee cups. Rule 10 shifts the costs, which are not accounted for in our project estimate

or our schedule, to the subs.


The same is true of Rule 11. With waste disposal fees climbing yearly, we can't afford to be saddled with additional costs caused by inconsiderate subs who leave their debris all over the place. If we're running a large project, we provide a dumpster for all trades to use, but subs still must pick up after themselves daily. If we're running a small project, each trade is responsible for its own debris removal. In fact, on small jobs we don't include the cost of trash removal in our proposal. So if we're forced to clean up a sub's debris and pay to remove it, we'll blow our estimate. And because we'll have to schedule workers to do the clean up, we'll blow our schedule.

Property Damage

We treat each client's home as though it were our own, and we understand the value of each trade's hard work. We don't tolerate others who show little concern for either. Rule 12 makes it clear that we expect subs to respect one another's work as well as our client's property.

Rule 13 recognizes that renovation and restoration work usually entails working around old, established trees and shrubs. We want our subs to show as much concern for our clients' property as we do. When necessary, we'll even bring in an arborist or nurseryman to temporarily move plantings that would otherwise be damaged.

Phones and Faxes

Our supervisors rely on phones and faxes to keep the work progressing on our larger job sites. By providing these services to our subs as well, we help their portion of the project move along quickly and efficiently, too. Rule #14 helps us to control the cost, and ensures that we have a paper trail of our communications, should disputes or misunderstandings arise. 

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