

# Temporary Workforce, Permanent Safety Standards

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By Richard D'Silva, Presales Solutions Consultant at [EcoOnline](#)

From facilities and logistics to transport and retail, businesses across sectors turn to seasonal employment each Winter to source the extra help they need. Unfortunately, safety does not always receive the same level of planning. Between 2024 and 2025, despite making up only 15% of the workforce, contract workers accounted for 40% of workplace fatalities.

The risk is not driven by attitude or ability. It is driven by exposure. Temporary workers are more likely to encounter unfamiliar equipment, disrupted routines and shifting expectations, all while trying to prove themselves in a compressed timeframe. There is a clear need for an approach that creates a culture of safety that protects temporary workers to the same standard as permanent staff. So how can organisations achieve it?

As Winter brings more temporary and contract workers into the business, it amplifies the risks workers face, and the day-to-day safety controls required. These are processes that should continue long after this period ends.

## Understanding Holiday Hazards

According to an EcoOnline study, almost half (42%) of managers observe a rise in incidents over the festive period. Fortunately, the top hazards identified – fatigue from increased workload and/or longer hours (38%), weather-related risks (38%) and increased stress to meet deadlines (34%) – can be prevented with the right strategy in place.

According to those on the ground, the most effective uses of health and safety software to mitigate seasonal hazards include training and learning (41%), safety inspections (40%) and comprehensive risk assessments (39%). Through the development of a safety-focused tech stack, business leaders can introduce a comprehensive and ever evolving approach that encompasses all three.

### Setting Temporary Workers Up for Success

When onboarding a temporary worker, managers should start by stepping into their shoes. To them, the site, the people and the risks are unknown. The necessary documentation for specific tasks and the specific vulnerabilities they may face, including working alone, are still to be discovered. And with FMs facing increasing workloads, this extra strain can put temporary workers at risk.

This is why generic inductions fall short. Temporary workers need role-specific, accessible training from day one, supported by digital tools that reflect how people actually work today. That training should cover core health and safety topics such as lifting and handling heavy loads, chemical safety, fire risks, safe use of equipment and basic hazard identification, all linked to the tasks and locations where they will be working. A modern safety setup needs to make this possible by combining:

- Integrated digital training, delivered through a learning management system (LMS) and matched to their role and environment
- Mobile-friendly checklists to guide routine inspections and pre-task checks
- Structured hazard and risk assessments to reduce blind spots
- Simple near-miss and incident reporting that removes friction from speaking up

For younger workers in particular, this digital-first approach directly supports confidence and compliance. In EcoOnline's Workplace Safety and Sustainability Report, 82% of those aged 18-34 say digital tools would help them feel safer. When temporary staff can access training, procedures and reporting tools on their phones, safety becomes part of the job - not an extra burden to remember.

### Preparing for Higher-Risk Work with Digital Permits

Not all temporary workers will undertake high-risk tasks, and many will focus on lower risk, routine activities. However, where temporary or contract workers are engaged in higher-risk work, such as hot works, confined space entry or working at height, a more stringent layer of control of work is required.

Here, a digital permit-to-work solution plays a critical role. Rather than treating seasonal workers as an exception, they should be added into the system in the same way as permanent employees, with their training records, competencies and authorisations linked directly to the permits they need to perform the job.

This reduces the reliance on memory and manual paperwork for facilities managers during already pressured periods. It also helps ensure that:

- Only properly certified workers are approved for high-risk tasks
- All necessary controls and isolations are documented before work begins
- There is a clear audit trail of who is working where and under what conditions

As the Health and Safety Executive points out, "a permit to work' is not a replacement for robust risk

assessment, but can help bring the risk assessment ‘to life’, at the sharp end, where it matters.” Used in conjunction with strong digital training and clear reporting channels, permits become part of a joined-up approach that protects both permanent and temporary workers.

#### Reinforcing Permanent Safety Standards

A busy season shouldn’t mean a disregard of the usual safety practices. The wrong documentation or training that fails to cover all areas puts temporary employees unnecessarily at risk, particularly when facilities managers are under increased operational pressure.

To protect workers amid growing workloads, organisations must move away from fragmented, paper-based systems and equip teams with connected digital processes that support training, inspections, risk assessments and, where required, high-risk work controls.

With the right foundations in place, businesses can scale their workforce at pace, while ensuring that temporary support never comes at the cost of permanent safety standards.