

Are you prepared for power failures?

Retail CONSTRUCTION MAGAZINE®

THE JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION & FACILITIES OPERATION

SPECIAL REPORT:

Annual landlord, developer report

SPECIAL SECTION:

Restroom design, maintenance trends

Steve Hall
Vice President
of Development

7-Eleven hits the gas pedal

Convenience store giant plans new 1,000 remodels a year, gasoline

Featured in this Issue
AMERICAN TESCOR, LLC



A division of Merchants Information Solutions, Inc.
Moving to...
...mando in '08

When it comes to worker injuries the 80/20 rule applies. Eighty percent of the cost will come from 20 percent of the claims.

By Peter D. Bullard
and Stacy Shields

Pre-employment testing can spot potential injury-prone employees

Ever hired someone only to have them absent a short time later? You are not alone. When trying to get a project done, few things are more frustrating to construction managers than unanticipated absences. These absences hurt productivity and set your schedule back. And absences due to worker injuries can quickly start siphoning the profit from your project.

When it comes to worker injuries the 80/20 rule applies. Eighty percent of the cost will come from 20 percent of the claims. Researchers have been busy trying to identify where those claims will come from and have developed a variety of useful safety initiatives. Yet given the huge costs associated with worker absences due to injuries, more remains to be done.

Worker injury data

According to the **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics**, it turns out that about a third of all injury claims come from those employed less than a year — in other words, new hires. And nearly 13 percent of claims are filed within the first three months of employment! These are the employees who have logged the fewest hours.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, it turns out that about a third of all injury claims come from those employed less than a year — in other words, new hires. And nearly 13 percent of claims are filed within the first three months of employment!

Your project does not need workers who will soon be off the job collecting both wages and medical payments from you. Yet most projects have such individuals. And most of these individuals are from your group of new hires, not from your more seasoned veteran workers who have been on the job a while.

Reasons behind the risks

When it comes to injuries and absences, veteran workers with more experience and skill have obvious advantages over green new hires. But there are two other often overlooked elements that play a critical role in determining who is most likely to soon be absent — the habits and personal traits of the worker. Those with little loyalty and a poor work ethic can be expected to start missing work fairly quickly.

Most of these ill-suited employees either quit or get fired, which leads to

high turnover. And the construction site with high employee turnover is bound to have a higher accident rate than the one with a cadre of reliable field-tested veterans. This is because veteran workers become veterans due to their good work habits and safety record.

While using field-tested veterans is ideal, sooner or later nearly all construction supervisors are faced with the necessity of hiring new people. Unfortunately, they usually know little about which new hires have the habits and personal traits necessary to become a veteran, and which new hires will turn out to be expensive hiring mistakes.

A cost-effective solution

Some companies have been successful in reducing absences and costly injuries by pre-screening their job applicants with integrity tests to weed out the applicants most likely to become problems.

These tests measure an applicant's tendency to steal, engage in fights and abuse drugs. They do an excellent job of identifying high risk applicants.

There are two types of integrity tests, personality measures and behavioral assessments. Each has their strengths and weaknesses. Personality tests examine attitudes and opinions. Their questions often have no obvious connection to personal drug use and theft.

Since the questions on a personality test are subtle, the applicants often have little or no idea of the test's purpose. For this reason, such tests are generally very non-threatening. These tests do a very good job of rank ordering job applicants by the risk they pose to the employer. Other types of personality tests are designed to measure specific applicant traits that may be relevant to specific functions such as a sales or customer service.

In contrast to personality tests, behavioral assessments ask very direct ques-

Some integrity tests have been shown to reduce workers' compensation losses among new hires by 50 percent or more when compared to the losses from more tenured workers.

The great success of behavioral assessments in obtaining admissions of bad behavior is explained by a concept psychologists call cognitive dissonance. More literally, the term means a conflict (dissonance) in thinking (cognition). This concept has to do with how people handle anxiety and guilt.

tions about theft and personal drug use. These tests are very open and there is no attempt at subtlety. All job candidates understand what is being asked and why.

It would be easy to conclude that applicants, knowing they are applying for a job, would lie in answering such direct questions. But that is not the case with professionally developed behavioral assessments. Applicants give very candid answers to these questions.

The great success of behavioral assessments in obtaining admissions of bad behavior is explained by a concept psychologists call cognitive dissonance. More literally, the term means a conflict (dissonance) in thinking (cognition). This concept has to do with how people handle anxiety and guilt.

When people first engage in activities they know are wrong (in conflict with laws and standards of acceptable behavior) they feel anxious and guilty. Over time, those who persist in theft and substance abuse become increasingly plagued by their anxiety and guilt (dissonance).

In these cases, there are two ways to resolve their anxiety (dissonance). They can either change their bad behavior, or they can change their thinking and come to accept their activities as normal. Those who persist in bad behavior have rationalized their activities, no longer think of them as particularly wrong and no longer feel anxious.

Now you know why most thieves are convinced that everyone occasionally steals, and why most chronic drug abusers think society as a whole abuses drugs. Because these people think of themselves as engaging in normal behavior, they are generally not hesitant to disclose them on a test. One of the benefits of a behavioral assessment versus a personality test is that the employer has direct knowledge of the applicant's activities. Hiring decisions based on behavioral tests are very easy to defend.

In contrast to applicants who fail integrity tests, workers who pass are more productive and dependable, and have far fewer absences or injuries. Our own research indicates that these workers

not only file fewer injury claims, but these claims close about 33 percent faster than claims from unscreened workers.

This is important because the longer a claim file is open the more time it has to incur additional costs. This is why you should be eager to get an injured employee back to work, even if only on a limited basis.

Both kinds of integrity tests are useful pre-employment screening methods. They are powerful risk control tools. Some integrity tests have been shown to reduce workers' compensation losses among new hires by 50 percent or more when compared to the losses from more tenured workers. In organizations with significant employee turnover and high workers' compensation costs, the savings can be huge. To keep productivity high while keeping absences and injuries low, you might want to consider integrity testing. **R**

Peter D. Bullard is the founder of American Tesco LLC, a division of Merchants Information Solutions. He is also an adjunct professor of industrial/organizational psychology at Portland State University in Oregon. He can be reached at 425.292.0521 or by e-mail at pete@ati3.com.

Stacy Shields is director of sales for American Tesco. She can be reached at 602.744.3790 or by e-mail at sshields@merchantsinfo.com.

Add an Invaluable Screening Tool to Your Tool Kit!



Identify high-risk job applicants with Tescor Screening. The Tescor Survey identifies applicants who engage in theft, substance abuse, hostility, and dishonesty.

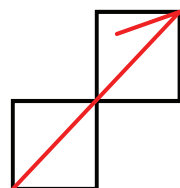


Measurable Results with Tescor's Behavioral Psychological Assessment:

- Reduce workers' compensation loss rates up to 50% or more
- Identify applicants with an "entitlement mentality"
- Improve workforce quality
- Process is entirely electronic
- Survey takes 15-20 minutes
- 22 Languages available



To learn more on how you can utilize integrity testing as a screening tool and improve your company earnings, call us today at 800.504.1760, or visit www.americantescor.com.



AMERICAN TESCOR, LLC

*A division of
Merchants Information Solutions, Inc.*