



# WOSHTEP BULLETIN

Newsletter for WOSH Specialists and Trainers

Happy and Healthy New Year to all Workers in California!

Winter 2012

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## Safety and Health of Workers in the Current Economy: Work Organization Hazards

A newer kind of work hazard for many workers has to do with how work is organized and with the relationship between employer and workers. Working as an independent contractor or subcontracted worker, or as a temporary worker in low-wage sectors has been called contingent work and has been associated with increased injury and disease rates, increased exposure to hazards, and decreased worker and manager knowledge of occupational health regulations. Contingent work is characterized by job insecurity in the form of competition for jobs and contracts, pressure to earn a livable income, long work hours, fast work pace and pressure to accept high-risk activities.<sup>1</sup>

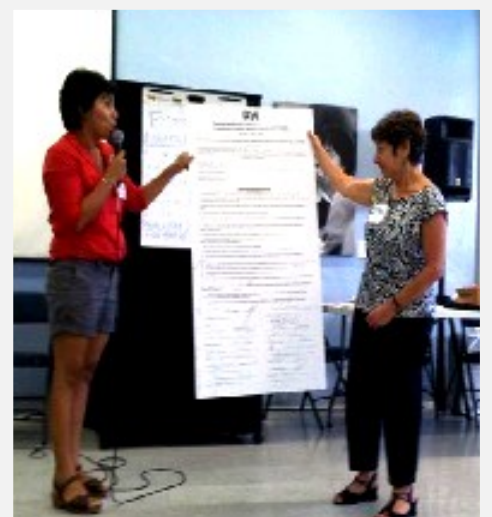
Warehouse workers, for example, many of who are hired through temporary staffing agencies, typically receive no training and are pushed to work fast and hard with no chance for a permanent job that complies with basic labor or safety and health laws. Violations and injuries are commonly ignored by temporary staffing agencies, which discourage undocumented workers from reporting problems. Per the Warehouse Workers Resource Center, over 40% of the workers in the warehouse industry in the Inland Empire work through temporary staffing agencies. These are low-wage workers who compete for the opportunity to return to work the next day. Though often retained through the temporary staffing agency for months or years, these workers are at constant risk of being eliminated.

There are several ways in which this type of employment puts workers *Continued on page 2*

## Specialists at the Latino Worker Summit 2011: Safety, Health and Labor Rights

Over 82 workers and worker advocates (including WOSH Specialists and trainers) and more than a dozen federal and state OSHA inspectors participated in the Los Angeles Latino Worker Summit, which included workshops on Preventing Construction Fatalities/Injuries, Preventing Back Injuries, Chemical Hazard Awareness, Machine Safety, and Heat Illness Prevention and a section called "Meet Your Government Agency," where there was an opportunity for workers, community leaders and staff from the agencies charged with protecting workers' rights to converse about challenges, resources, partnerships and opportunities. The event built on Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis' kickoff summit in 2010, which brought together over 1,000 people in

Houston to highlight the disproportionate rate of work-related injuries and illnesses among Latino workers. This successful event was possible because of the remarkable work of a group of WOSH specialists who attended an intense 32-hour, Spanish-language Training of Trainers (TOT) provided to 21 workers and advocates at the LA County Federation of Labor. Participants learned about workplace injury and illness prevention and about popular education methods in order to teach safety and



SoCalCOSH's Sumaq Alvarado presents policy recommendations to new Cal/OSHA chief Ellen Widess

*Continued on page 3*

## Safety and Health of Workers in the Current Economy : *Continued*

at a greater risk for injury and illness. First, in many cases, neither the temporary staffing agencies nor the warehouse owners or managers assume their legal responsibility to provide a healthy and safe workplace for temporary workers. Second, without a responsible employer, these workers lack opportunities for training. Third, without an understanding of workplace hazards and without knowledge of Cal/OSHA protections and of their rights, many workers are afraid to report hazards or to seek training for fear that addressing hazards could result in the loss of work. Temporary staffing agencies can easily stop offering employment opportunities to any worker who reports a hazard, asks to change working conditions or files a complaint.

WOSH Specialists are trained to identify workplace hazards and to propose solutions that get to the root of the problem. This may mean recognizing contingent work as hazardous work, advocating for better working conditions for all and sharing information about the workplace safety and health rights and responsibilities of workers and employers.

**(Cover article)**

### Work Organization Hazards: A Case of subcontracted workers



Carpet Installer. Accessed online

Recently, I hired a very well-known company to install a new carpet in my condo and paid about \$5,000.00 for materials and labor in advance. To my surprise, only two people came to do the job. Realizing the amount of furniture and how

heavy some of the pieces were, the workers felt discouraged. They explained to me that if they called others to help them that would reduce the amount of money that everyone would receive. They were only being paid \$250.00 for the day by the contracting company!

When preparing to move a large bookshelf, one of the workers prayed, "God help me, so I don't hurt my back again." We offered to help but they said: "Please do not worry about us. We're already used to it."

Watching them work was very painful. When they were removing the old carpet, which already had at

least 15 years of use by several families before us, they had nothing to protect their faces, so they were breathing and swallowing up a lot dust! I asked why they were not wearing masks, which should have been provided by the contracting company, and they answered: "No Madam, the company does not give us any protective equipment. They just send us to work and we manage however we can."

I told them that the company has to provide the protective equipment necessary to perform their work and that as workers, they have rights. Again, their answer surprised me: "We are not on their payroll. They do not give us anything. We have no rights"!

I insisted and said, "We have rights, as workers, and as human beings, to make a decent living and return home safe and sound." These workers needed mechanical support, water, rest, protective equipment, information on safety and health at work, and above all, decent treatment. But they often have no employer with the resources and the responsibility to provide those conditions for them.

**By Flor Vásquez**  
**LOSH Bilingual Administrative Assistant**  
**WOSH Specialist**

<sup>1</sup>Quinlan, Michael, Claire Mayhew & Phillip Bohle (2001). The global expansion of precarious employment, work disorganization and consequences for occupational health: a review of current research. *International Journal of Health Services* (310) 233-5414.

## WOSH Specialists at the Latino Worker Summit 2011: *Continued*

health to workers at the August 28<sup>th</sup> Latino Summit 2011 held at the Downtown UCLA Labor Center (DLC). TOT participants included CLEAN carwash workers and two of their staff, IDEPSCA immigrant worker advocates, LA Federation of Labor staff, SoCal COSH staff, the training director of the California United Long Term Care Workers Union, and workers and staff of Warehouse Workers United. The first TOT session opened up with Jordan Barab, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Fed OSHA, who generously spent an hour with trainees answering questions and engaging in a dialogue that provided an exciting and direct way to learn about OSHA regulations. During the Latino Worker Safety and health Summit, TOT graduates facilitated 90-minute workshops and two educational skits for other Spanish-speaking workers with the support of the Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program (WOSHTEP) and LOSH Susan Harwood project staff. This event represented the first time worker safety and health was featured as part of the Los Angeles Mexican Consulate Labor Rights Week. Opening up the day was DLC Director Kent Wong and Mexican Consulate General David Figueroa Ortega. Ken Atha, Regional Administrator, DOL/OSHA Region IX, the Chief of Cal/OSHA, Ellen Widess, and Maria Elena Durazo, head of the L.A. County Federation of Labor, all shared their knowledge of occupational safety and health (OSH) during the opening sessions.

As part of the efforts of UCLA/ LOSH and other key partners promoting health, safety and policy education,

the Latino Summit 2011 (August), built off the momentum of Workers' Memorial Day (April), quickly followed by the Spanish TOT (July) and provided a strong foundation for the bringing together of labor unions at the Safer and Stronger Conference (September). Contact us to find out how you can get involved in the many opportunities throughout the year as part of our larger goal to bring together a strong Network of Safety and health Specialists and Trainers on behalf of workers in all of Southern California.

**By Tanya Akel, LOSH Project Manager & Fernando Tapia, LOSH WOSHTEP Coordinator**



Martin Rodriguez, from Southern California Plaster Tenders' Apprenticeship Program, teaches construction safety at Latino Worker Summit

2 The worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program is administered by the Commission on Health and Safety Worker's Compensation in the Department of Industrial Relations through inter-agency agreements with the Labor Occupational Health Program at the University of California Berkeley and the Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program at the University of California Los Angeles



### Welcoming New WOSHTEP Staff!

Flor Vásquez is our new LOSH Bilingual Administrative Assistant for WOSHTEP. She is responsible for all the logistics for our educational activities, coordinating, organizing and preparing all the details that it takes to put a course together. Flor assists with the creation of English and Spanish Bilingual materials (brochures, flyers, newsletter and other educational/promotional materials) needed for our LOSH Program. In addition, she gathers and organizes all course paperwork, such as registration, sign-in sheets, consent and evaluation forms, as well as documentation of all other related activities.

Flor's most recent assignment was as an Administrative Assistant for the UCLA Early Care & Education Department, where she performed a broad range of administrative, customer service and clerical functions, working closely with parents, children, teachers, center directors and the general public. You can contact Flor at: [fvasquez@irle.ucla.edu](mailto:fvasquez@irle.ucla.edu) or 310-794-5996

## Policy Updates:

### California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board PPE Regulation

A number of WOSH Specialists weighed in on a proposed revised personal protective equipment (PPE) regulation and wrote to the Standards Board. The OSHA Standards Board voted to maintain the current language regarding PPE: "PPE" includes such things as goggles, protective

footwear, gloves, ventilators, hardhats, etc. The Board proposed redrafting the regulation to make the employer-pays rule easy to understand and enforce. However, at the October 20, 2011 meeting, the board instead voted to study the issue further through an advisory council.

### Revised Memorandum of Understanding between the Departments of Homeland Security and Labor Concerning Enforcement Activities at Worksites

On March 31, 2011, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Labor signed an updated memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding activities at worksites. The revised MOU was designed to help prevent employers from retaliating against undocumented workers who file safety and health labor complaints and or assert other rights with the Department of Labor (DOL).

The MOU states that the Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) should not take enforcement actions at any worksite that is the subject of an ongoing DOL investigation or any related proceeding. Importantly, ICE agents are not to pose as DOL agents including as safety and health inspectors and wage and hour investigators.

## WOSH Specialists and Trainers Join Cal/OSHA's Heat Illness Prevention

During this past summer and for the second consecutive year, Cal/OSHA led a statewide Heat Illness Prevention Campaign. Bilingual staff from UCLA /LOSH and WOSH Specialists and trainers played an essential role in the campaign, which aims to reduce the number of illnesses and deaths among key industries in which work is performed outdoors. In Southern California, we carried out a series of Spanish-language Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions covering five different cities, San Diego, Los Angeles, Fontana, Ventura and Coachella, during the peak-heat months of July and August. These TOTs included community leaders and workers in the construction, landscaping, agriculture and transport industries among others. The sessions prepared participants to teach other workers in their workplaces and communities about the dangers of working in extreme

heat conditions and how to prevent heat illnesses. The 159 participants from community, religious, ethnic, work and health organizations represented close to 70 different groups that reach workers in key sectors, including agriculture, landscaping, construction, transportation, warehouse, car wash and others. It was a very rewarding experience for all those involved in this campaign because of the positive response to the message of preventing heat-related illnesses and fatalities. Also, we learned first-hand about the daily reality faced by workers in these industries and shared a motivation to make a difference. If you are interested in



Participants at Community TOT

information about the heat illness prevention campaign, all materials can be found at Cal/OSHA's website: [www.99calor.org](http://www.99calor.org).

By Luis Lagos, WOSH Specialist/Trainer

## WOSH Specialists in the Community: LOSH and IDEPSCA's Partnership

### "Worker crushed to death when gate of bakery falls on him"

Unfortunately, the death and injury of workers is news we hear very often. The high rate of exposure to safety and health risks faced by workers every day and their limited access to health resources are the reasons agencies like the Institute for Popular Education in Southern California (IDEPSCA) and UCLA-LOSH have to work together to promote safe workplaces through safety and health education in our communities.

This partnership started back in 2006 when IDEPSCA staff, which is already dedicated to community education, was trained as WOSH Specialists and Trainers. This training, along with ongoing technical assistance, helped the establishment of IDEPSCA's Worker Health Program, which focuses on making worker health a priority in all of IDEPSCA's community work.

Following IDEPSCA's mission, the Worker Health Program has been educating day laborers, gardeners and household workers interested in improving their working conditions. Program activities aim to help them prevent

behaviors and conditions that endanger their safety and health in every area of their lives and achieve healthy lifestyles.

The Worker Health program includes a group of community health promoters who, among other things, have organized safety and health committees in several IDEPSCA projects that work with specific industries, have participated in many city and county health fairs, and have conducted a study of safety and health of workers. The Worker Health Promoters have also facilitated workshops on many topics and with many community and worker groups, always incorporating safety and health and leadership development in these sessions. The partnership between IDEPSCA and UCLA-LOSH has also enabled the development of educational materials appropriate for the large community of Spanish speaking



Day laborer learns about his rights to a safe and healthy workplace

workers in Los Angeles under WOSHTEP community outreach and education efforts.

**By Patricia Rizo**  
**WOSH Specialist/Trainer**  
**LOSH Community Outreach Representative**

**NEW!**

**Refresher Training for our Specialists and Trainers on:  
 Indoor Heat Illness Prevention and Green Chemistry!**

**Dates to be announced!**

**Please contact Fernando Tapia at 310-794-5971 or at [ftapia@irle.ucla.edu](mailto:ftapia@irle.ucla.edu) if you are particularly affected by these jobs hazards**

## WOSH Specialists and Trainers keep Worker Safety and Health in Everyone's Mind at Phoenix House

Phoenix House Academy is a residential and outpatient treatment program for youth residents ages 13 to 20 who struggle with co-occurring substance abuse and mental health problems. Residents attend a fully accredited, on-site high school while receiving comprehensive treatment services that include individual, group and family counseling. Youth in treatment benefit from a wide range of support services, such as health care, life skills training, career development and legal services. Enrichment activities include art, dance, sports, creative writing and music.

The Safety Committee at Phoenix House, San Diego (Descanso), in an effort to raise safety awareness with the residents, sponsored a poster contest. The contest was open to all current residents of the San Diego Academy. A number of submissions were received from the residents, and from those, eight Phoenix House Academy residents were selected to design eight posters which would be submitted to the competition.

The process was interesting to watch as residents initially found it difficult to think of anything, except for safety around the swimming pool. One of the teens relayed a story of how they attempted to play with a squirrel and got bitten, then having to endure a series of



Winning Poster

painful rabies shots. Going through this exercise definitely raised their safety awareness level as they increasingly recognized many safety hazards and poor practices beyond the swimming pool. For example, they remembered it is unsafe to lean back in their classroom chairs.

The winning poster was created by teen resident Vanessa V., who was rewarded with a special journal. Descanso is now sponsoring a "Catch Me Being Safe" contest where both staff and residents can drop a "good job" description of the effort into a bowl whenever they see someone making the facility safer. Each week, a name

will be drawn from the bowl at the Community Meeting and the person

will be acknowledged with a prize.

The Phoenix House Safety Committees in all seven sites (Carlsbad, Descanso, Lake View Terrace, Santa Ana, Santa Fe Springs, and Venice) are made up of WOSH Specialists and Trainers. They take the lead in all activities meant to provide a safe environment for Phoenix House staff and residents. They, more than anyone, have learned that a safe workplace requires a long-term commitment and efforts from employers, workers and clients. It takes constant learning and constant action!

**By: Irma Matta, WOSH Specialist**

### Special Mention: Tomás Rodríguez

Tomás Rodríguez is a WOSH Specialist and Trainer. His story begins three years ago while he was working at a car wash in Culver City and was walking around Plaza Mexico in Lynwood. The situation in this workplace was very hostile, and this day, after a day of heavy work, Tomás felt defeated. He saw a poster advertising a free workplace safety and health training on the window of



From feeling discouraged and isolated to acting as a Worker Leader

a community organization. He went in and asked if he could take the course, and that was how he received his first training on workplace safety and health. The training was taught in Spanish in sessions of 3 hours so that workers like Tomás could attend after work. **It took nine weeks for Tomás and others to complete the 24-hour WOSH Specialist course! In this training,**

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**Tomás learned about the impact of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions and that there are laws that protect his rights as a worker and as a human being.** He quickly became a resource person with this new information at his worksite. Soon after, he became a worker leader in the Community Labor Environmental Action Network (CLEAN) Carwash campaign, and participated in efforts for car wash workers to receive protective equipment, minimum wage, and most importantly, drinking water and basic sanitary services while at work. Tomás Rodríguez now has a CLEAN Carwash Campaign scholarship and is looking to expand his knowledge of the rights and laws that protect all

workers. This July, he was in the WOSHTEP WOSH Specialist 32-hour Spanish TOT, and shortly after, he participated in a compelling socio-drama during the Los Angeles Latino Worker Summit in August. Tomás' message to other workers is: "I encourage you all to speak up and participate. As human beings and as workers, we all have rights, regardless of our race or place of origin. We are hard-working people who have come to this country in search of improvement for ourselves and for our families."

**By Flor Vásquez  
LOSH Bilingual Administrative Assistant  
WOSH Specialist**

## Taking One Step at a Time in San Diego to Create Awareness

Participating in San Diego since 2006 with the theme of workplace safety and health has allowed us to become part of several working committees including the Education Committee of Community Health Workers in San Diego City College. Through these partnerships, the theme of safety and health at work has been included in the curriculum of the bilingual Health Promoter Mini Certificate Program (8 weeks) which reaches students who have not yet attained the necessary level of the English language to take the two-year certification program in college. Another outstanding achievement this year is that the California Office of Bi-national Border Health (COBBH) Survey, given to administrators and promoters who have or want to start a program of safety and health in their respective agencies, included questions about workplace safety and health in order to learn what percentage of them have considered this important topic as part of the needs of their group. The result was that only 50% of developers surveyed had heard of or received any training regarding work-related illnesses and how to prevent accidents at work. These results were shared with the administrators on October 7<sup>th</sup> at the "Advancing your Agency with Promoters/Community Health Workers" Symposium at San Diego City College, which was carried out as part of the events of the Bi-national Health Week.

As part of WOSHTEP, we have recently conducted four Awareness Sessions in San Diego (one in English and three in Spanish). We are scheduled to facilitate an Awareness



Bilingual Health Promoter Mini Certificate Program

Session with Household Workers in December and will offer a 24-hour WOSH Specialist course at San Diego City College next spring. Little by little, we are developing a strong presence in San Diego. More WOSH Specialists and Trainers here mean stronger advocacy for safe and healthy workplaces and communities, especially with San Diego's unique proximity to the international border with Mexico.

**By Katia Rodríguez, WOSH Specialist/Trainer  
LOSH SD Community Outreach Representative**



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Organization  
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## UCLA LABOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM

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Los Angeles, CA 90095

JK-R1

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**24 Hour Open Enrollment Specialist Trainings**  
Invite people or staff you know who needs this training and will help grow our So Cal network.

- For non profits at the San Fernando Valley January 31, Feb. 1-2
- At San Diego City College and receive continuing education units March 17, 24, 31
- At L.A. Trade Technical College and receive continuing education units April 21, 22, 28

### First Union Specialist Training in Orange County

On November 2011 LOSH partnered up with the Orange County Labor Federation to deliver a 24 Hour Specialist Training for Union Leaders  
Nine Unions Participated!

#### For more information in the Southern California area, contact:

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