

WOSH Bulletin

Newsletter for WOSH Specialists and Trainers



SPRING 2008



Workers' Memorial Day, Remembering the Fallen

Decades of struggle by workers and their unions have resulted in significant improvements in working conditions. But the toll of workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths remains enormous and unacceptably high. The numbers speak for themselves: Nationally, in 2005, more than 5,700 workers were killed on the job, and 4.2 million private-sector workers suffered injuries, according to AFL-CIO's 2007 "Death on the Job" report.

More recently, Hank Cierpich, a Fatality Investigator, for the California Department of Public Health, Occupational Health Branch reported a case of a 23-year-old Hispanic car wash attendant who died when he was pulled into a side arm rotating brush in a drive-through car wash facility. The worker was using a high pressure hose to wash away all the dirt and debris on the floor of the tunnel portion of the car wash. He had turned on the car wash equipment in the tunnel to flood the floor to make it easier to clean. The hose the worker was using was wrapped around his foot and got caught in the side arm brush; it pulled him into the rotating motion of the brush.

The owner of the company was in his office when he stated he heard a strange sound coming from the car wash tunnel. He stated he knew something was wrong because the equipment in the car wash tunnel was running but no vehicles were being washed. He then walked back to the entrance of the car wash, shut off the system, and went into the tunnel where he saw the worker with his head against the wall and his feet entangled in the side arm brush.

Unfortunately, the death of this car wash worker is not an isolated incident. Few people realize that

if that car wash worker was the only worker to die on the job that day, it would have been a good day in the American workplace. Every day in this country, more than 15 workers are crushed in trench collapses, shot in convenience stores, mangled in machinery, killed in vehicle accidents, or fall to their deaths from scaffolds and cell towers. The memories of these workers are commemorated annually on April 28, Workers Memorial Day - the anniversary of the founding of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.



Every year, people in hundreds of communities and at worksites recognize workers who have been killed or severely injured on the job. Workers Memorial Day is an opportunity to focus on reducing the toll of job injuries and deaths. Our work will continue until good, safe, and healthy jobs become a priority for all.

For a complete report of the car wash worker case or other cases, and information on the California FACE Program, contact the California Department of Public Health, Occupational Health Branch, FACE Program, 850 Marina Bay Parkway, Building P, 3rd floor, Richmond, CA 94804, or visit their website at: www.dhs.ca.gov/ohb/ohsep/face.

FEATURED SPECIALISTS AND TRAINERS



Eugenio Barrera

My name is Eugenio Barrera. I participated in a training for occupational health and safety specialists in December 2007. I thank all the instructors and supporters that made the three day event possible.

Thanks to LOSH's training, I was able to go back to my workplace with new ideas about health and safety. The company I work for has its own take on the subject. Because of the training, I was able to express my ideas and opinions about what I learned and my supervisor was very surprised. He let me implement what I learned on a trial basis, and to his surprise I was able to make three changes in my workplace:

1. We now use floor mats, warning labels and equipment to dry wet floors in order to prevent slips and falls.
2. It was made clear that employers, not workers, are primarily responsible for workplace safety.
3. Cleaning equipment and supplies, such as mops, sponges, and brushes, are kept clean, inspected frequently, and stored in an isolated place to avoid contamination.

I want to thank everyone and hope that you continue with these training sessions that are so beneficial to the community. They will help us prevent accidents, protect our health, and create a better work environment in our different industries.



Cynthia Singleton

WOSH Trainer Cynthia Singleton wears many hats in her community as Vice President of the Southern California Coalition on Occupational Safety and Health (SoCalCOSH), Business Agent for the Utility Workers Union of America Local 132, and billing analyst for the Southern California Gas Co. Above all, she is serious about safety and health in the workplace, and believes that you should make safety a way of life.

As part of this way of life, Cynthia is active in many efforts to educate workers on policy and in facilitating ergonomic workshops for her co-workers. As a member of the health and safety committee at her job, she has taken actions such as circulating a survey to prioritize and address issues. She has also developed a monthly department newsletter that addresses their seasonal health and safety concerns. Cynthia's best advice to workers is to stretch daily, several times a day, no matter your age and physical ability. She says, "If you feel discomfort, don't ignore it. Get help immediately."

"I have been shocked over, and over again, at the lack of safety training provided for the employees at many of the very large organizations that I have facilitated workshops for; they do not provide ergonomic equipment. Many of their workers have no idea what adjustments their chairs can provide for their comfort. When I heard some of the experiences of the workshop participants I got angry. I felt so sorry for them that they had to work with antique equipment, and with serious physical pain."

Cynthia plans to continue spreading her safety message as a WOSH Trainer and applies the lessons learned calling herself a "Safety Avenger".



Luis Lagos

My name is Luís Lagos. I am 29 years old. I am from Honduras. I came to this country as an immigrant and, like many others, had to enter the labor force with the sole purpose of surviving. I have done different types of work, including being a car-washer, dish-washer, kitchen assistant, cook, waiter, and day laborer.

My work experience helped me develop skills and knowledge regarding the constant and common hazards involved in each and every one of these jobs as well as how to address these hazards. My practical knowledge includes how to avoid getting injured and how to use equipment safely, since getting hurt means losing my job or losing much-needed income.

Spotlight on Day Laborers

Day laborers are low-wage workers whose employment is on a temporary basis. According to the National Day Labor Survey (NDLS), it is estimated that on any given day, approximately 117,600 day laborers are either looking for jobs or working as temporary laborers. Most often, day laborers connect

In these workplaces, there was no injury prevention program, let alone training on using dangerous equipment safely. We didn't know about worker's compensation and we were not informed about our many rights under OSHA. For my employers, productivity was more important than workers' health. Many times I became ill or injured because of my work and was never compensated or given medical treatment—all because I didn't know my rights as a worker and because of employer negligence.

In 2006, I found the Institute of Popular Education of Southern California (IDEPSCA) where I began to learn about occupational safety and health, and became a community organizer. I trained to be a WOSH Specialist and then took a "Training of the Trainers" course to become a WOSH trainer. This has allowed me to raise awareness about workplace hazards among groups of workers such as day laborers and household workers.

One way I do this is by teaching them how to map hazards in their workplace. I have also tried to educate these workers about their "right to know," a right they have been denied for years, and to foster worker leadership so that they can stand up for their rights. It's important to elicit workers' active participation so that the education process is more genuine, fair, authentic, and participatory. Together we can end the injustices!

to employers through the use of informal hiring sites such as public street corners or open space lots close to gas stations, convenience stores, and home improvement businesses. However, formal hiring sites or worker centers also exist and are being established as community institutions that seek to address public concerns arising from the day labor practice.





Every year:

5,700 workers are killed on the job in the U.S.

50,000 die from work-related diseases

Over 4,000,000 illnesses and injuries occur at the workplace

Every day:

11,000 workers need emergency medical care

200 workers are hospitalized

134 workers die from work-related illness

15 workers die on the job

Actions you can take:

Bring friends, family, and coworkers to the April 26 Workers' Memorial Day event.

Create a memorial in a workplace or community where workers have been killed on the job.

Distribute fliers and organize a call-in to congressional representatives during lunch or break times telling them to co-sponsor the Protecting America's Workers Act and to support stronger OSHA safety protections.

Hold a candlelight vigil, memorial service, or moment of silence to remember those who have died on the job, and to highlight local workplace health and safety issues.

Hold a public meeting with members of Congress in their home districts. Bring injured workers and family members who can talk firsthand about the need for strong safety and health protections.

Are You and Your Employer Ready for an Emergency?

By Ingrid Zubieta, Industrial Hygienist

Many companies have been more alert and proactive in preparing for all types of disasters since the September 11, 2001 attacks. However, many employees still don't know their workplace disaster response plans. Make a point to ask. Here are some tips to help you and your co-workers become better prepared:

Think Ahead:

Imagine there is an emergency in your office and you must leave quickly. Identify at least two exits from each room.

Evacuation Plan:

The ability to evacuate employees, customers, and visitors quickly and effectively can save lives. Designate a safe assembly area near your facility and another in the general area in case you must move further away.



Follow your evacuation route and proceed to the designated assembly area to have your attendance taken.

Know where the stairs, manual fire alarm devices, fire extinguishers and first aid kits are located.

Suggest that your employer conduct fire drills and practice evacuating your workplace twice a year.

Recommend the planned evacuation route be driven and alternate routes plotted on a map in case main roads are blocked or gridlocked.

Emergency Supply:

Think about the basics of survival: water, food, clean air, and warmth. Prepare a customized kit containing a flashlight, first aid supplies, whistle to signal for help, dust or filter mask, duct tape to "seal the room",



garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation, water, and non-perishable food to improve the quality of life immediately following a disaster.

Discuss what emergency supplies the company can feasibly provide, and what individuals should keep on hand.

Keep copies of important records in a waterproof portable container (identification information, local and out of the area emergency contacts, site maps, computer backups, and medication procedures) in case the person is unconscious.

The emergency kit should be in one container, ready to "grab and go" in case you are evacuated.

Chemical Exposure:

Concern about potential exposure to a chemical or other airborne hazard may require you to "shelter-in-place" and "seal the room." If you believe the air may be badly contaminated or you are instructed by local officials, follow the instructions to create a temporary barrier between you and the contaminated air outside.

If chemicals get inside the room, follow emergency procedures as previously instructed.

Review Plans Annually:

Emergency scenarios, needs, and concerns change over time. The emergency plan should be reviewed and updated regularly. Make sure your employer follows this step.

Remember: Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance!!!!

Young Workers Learn to Lead

UCLA-LOSH and UC Berkeley's Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) recently hosted the 4th Annual Young Worker Leadership Academies (YWLA), a three day conference for young workers and their adult sponsors. Attendees learn about young workers' rights and responsibilities, how to prevent work-related illnesses and injuries, and how to promote health and safety in the workplace.

YWLA teams attending the academy also develop a community project addressing young workers' rights during Safe Jobs for Youth Month, observed in May each year. Projects have included developing "Facts at Your Fingertips," wallet size information cards; creating training videos and public service announcements to educate employees on potential hazards and workplace safety; as well as holding workshops in classrooms or at community events.

YWLA alumnae also return to the academy as "Youth Mentors" who co-facilitate activities throughout the academy, serving as role models for current participants. They share their YWLA experience and their YWLA project with the new participants. Youth Mentors also create a project that focuses on young workers' rights and responsibilities.



Briselda Tejada, top left, at YWLA.

This year, for the first time, a Youth Mentor participated at both academies in Berkeley and Los Angeles! Briselda Tejada, a 2007 alumna from Los Angeles, had the opportunity to make her first trip outside of Southern California. This experience helped her develop stronger leadership and public speaking skills.

Briselda enjoyed meeting and working with other students, and learning about her rights in the workplace. As a Youth Mentor, she especially enjoyed leading activities: "I enjoyed the ice breakers and the jeopardy game because it's helpful to know my rights and let other people know their rights."

For more information on the YWLA contact Nancy Morales, Youth Project Coordinator 310-794-5996; moralesn@ucla.edu or visit www.losh.ucla.edu and www.youngworkers.org.

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Questions from the Parking Lot

What is the relationship between OSHA and Cal/OSHA? Are there formal ties between the two agencies or are they separate?

Answer:

OSHA is a branch of the Labor Department, and thus exercises its authority on a national level. Federal OSHA oversees Cal/OSHA as well as the other individual state OSHA programs.

We at Cal/OSHA answer to federal OSHA in our reports and investigations. They also fund a portion of our programs.

Federal OSHA sets the minimum guidelines that we follow. State OSHA regulations and guidelines have to be equal to, or stricter than, the federal guidelines.

Lilia Bowman, Cal/OSHA Inspector

This newsletter was developed by the UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) Program. These materials are part of the Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program (WOSHTEP) which is administered by the Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation in the Department of Industrial Relations through interagency agreements with the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at UC Berkeley and UCLA-LOSH.



**UCLA LABOR OCCUPATIONAL
SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM**

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Worker's Memorial Day Poster Inside



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Upcoming Events:

- **April 26 and May 3** - Los Angeles Trade Tech course on workplace health and safety. For information, email: laborcenter@lattc.edu or call: 213-763-7129
- **April 26** - Workers' Memorial Day event at the UCLA Downtown Labor Center 11am-3pm
- **May 1st** - International Workers' Day event. Meet at McArthur Park in Los Angeles at 2pm.