
DECLINE IN WORKPLACE INJURIES AND ILLNESSES

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics today announced that nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses among private industry employers declined in 2009 to a rate of 3.6 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers, down from a total case rate of 3.9 in 2008. BLS also reported a decline in the total number of cases from 3.7 million in 2008 to 3.3 million in 2009. Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis issued the following statement:

"While the reported decline in workplace injuries and illnesses is encouraging, 3.3 million workplace injuries and illnesses are 3.3 million too many. No worker should fear being injured or made sick for a paycheck.

"Complete and accurate workplace injury records can serve as the basis for employer programs to investigate injuries and prevent future occurrences. Most employers understand this and do their best to prevent worker injuries, but some do not. That is why my department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration is aggressively working to ensure the completeness and accuracy of injury data compiled by the nation's employers. We are concerned about the widespread existence of programs that discourage workers from reporting injuries, and we will continue to issue citations and penalties to employers that intentionally under-report workplace injuries.

"Too many Americans suffer each year from preventable injuries or illnesses they received while on the job. Even in these difficult economic times, we must keep in mind that no job is a good job unless it's a safe job."

SECRETARY OF LABOR TO ESTABLISH CHARTER ON CONSTRUCTION SAFETY AND HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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WASHINGTON - Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis will re-establish the charter of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health. The group advises the secretary on formulating safety and health standards and policies that affect construction workers and the construction industry. The charter will expire in two years.

"Since OSHA's inception, ACCSH has played an important role in furthering the safety and health of workers in the construction industry," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels. "The members' advice and recommendations are extremely valuable to the agency because they have a wealth of knowledge and real-world experience on a wide range of construction trades, activities and issues."

Established in 1969 as a continuing advisory committee under the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act, commonly known as the Construction Safety Act, ACCSH is comprised of 15 members appointed by the secretary. The advisory committee consists of five representatives of employers in the construction industry, five representatives who present the viewpoint of employees in the construction industry who are generally from various building trades unions, two public representatives, two representatives of state safety and health agencies and one from the National Institute of Occupational Health. The members generally serve staggered two-year terms and may be reappointed.

As part of its advisory role, ACCSH provides comments and recommendations on OSHA proposed rules affecting the construction

industry. In addition, the committee provides other recommendations and develops various work products such as quick cards and fact sheets for OSHA's consideration. Currently, ACCSH also has a number of active work groups focusing on areas including women/diversity in construction, education and training, green jobs, multilingual issues in construction, power fastening tools such as nail guns, prevention by design, residential fall protection, and silica and other construction health hazards. The meetings of ACCSH and its work groups are open to the public.

For more information on ACCSH and the group's reports and recommendations, go to <http://www.osha.gov/doc/accsch/index.html>.



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MONTHLY TOOLBOX TALK

PROJECT STARTUP

Planning and preparation are essential to a successful construction project! There is always planning and preparation work that you should be doing before you start to dig the first hole or pound the first nail. Some safety issues are common to all construction jobs, but every project has specific hazards that must be dealt with. Take the time to become familiar with each new project and its safety requirements.

Construction projects go smoother when everyone is working together. Knowledge is a powerful tool and must be utilized to its fullest potential. Therefore it is recommended that all work activities or tasks be planned.

Get a general feel for the project you are about to begin. Consider the requirements of the owner and the project, as well as the size, location, and type of jobsite. Think about the surrounding environment. You may have to deal with nature, wildlife, traffic or pedestrians. Be aware of access and security matters. Is it a secured lot? Do you have the required access to do your job? Do you need an ID badge or a permit for employee parking?

Make sure you have received all the required training for the project. Attend the safety orientation to learn the safety details. Are there any specific safety or project rules for this job? Have you been given a training schedule? Are there awards or incentives for project safety? Are you familiar with the safety goals or milestones? Do you know who the safety coordinator is and how to report hazards?

"Plan the work and work the plan" is an old saying in the construction world. You would think that planning would be common sense, but there are many jobs where this critical step gets skipped. The benefits of using a pre-task plan are enormous. First, it gives you an opportunity to plan the work activity. Next, you are able to identify any safety hazards and discuss appropriate corrective measures. You can focus on personal protective equipment and make sure that you have the right safety gear available.

There are also practical matters to consider. Become familiar with the location of sanitary facilities such as toilets, porta-johns, and hand-washing facilities. If they are available, find changing rooms and lockers for storing your personal items.

Know the location of the lunch room or break room, vending machines, drinking water, and ice. An effective pre-task plan will address the task, tools, equipment, weather, PPE, safety requirements, special conditions, and emergency requirements. All of these items should be addressed with the crewmembers prior to starting. Everyone should be given an opportunity to make suggestions and ask questions. Do you have these questions answered in your pre-task plan? Know what to do in case of emergencies.

- What will you do differently if it is raining, snowing, or there is ice on the ground?
- Do you have the right tools for the job?
- Have they been inspected and are they in good condition?
- Are there sufficient quantities of tools, PPE, and first aid supplies?
- Do you have fuel and is it stored properly?
- What are the evacuation routes?
- Are two-way radios, call boxes, or cell phones available?
- Learn where telephones, first aid kits, and fire extinguishers are located.
- Be able to locate emergency numbers for fire, police, and medical emergencies.
- Who is the first responder on your jobsite?
- How do you report an injury?

As you begin a new construction project, you have many things to think about such as personal protective equipment, fall protection, hazardous materials, heavy equipment, utilities, power lines, signs, hand and power tools, maintenance, and repairs. It's important that you get all your questions answered before you begin your work. Talk to your supervisor if you have any concerns.

You should ask and answer those same questions whenever you start a new task or start working in a new area. When the conditions or tasks change, the plan may need to change. Take time to discuss the changes and then implement them. Plan the work and work the plan.

A good plan worked by good tradesmen will produce good results.