

Cheating Death

Focus Four Presentation Lays Out Simple Steps To Avoid Construction's Biggest Mistakes

In 20 years as a construction safety professional, Jim Goss has heard all of the numbers before. That doesn't, however, make them any easier to digest, or any less tragic.

"Construction workers are five percent of the workforce," he said. "However, we account for 57 percent of all workplace injuries in the country, 21 percent of all fatalities and 19 percent of all worker's compensation claims.

"Change has to come, and it has to come from the AGC members."

Goss – Senior Vice President of Construction Safety Management, Inc. in Getzville, New York – was one presenter for the AGC of America's Focus Four Safety Training. The free seminar was presented at DePaul University's O'Hare Campus, and was designed to help construction companies avoid the four issues that most frequently cause death on a jobsite:

- Falls
- Electrocutations
- Struck-bys
- Caught-betweenes

"We're killing 1,200 people per year, and it's no accident that OSHA inspects us 54 percent of the time," Goss said. "They should inspect us and we have to be aware of what needs to change in our industry. While we're sitting in this classroom, four people are going to die in our business. This is about saving lives."

The program was developed and funded with the help of the OSHA's Susan Harwood Grant. Despite special emphasis by OSHA and targeted enforcement programs, the Focus Four have been responsible for over three-quarters of the construction-related

deaths in the United States in the last decade.

Goss and co-presenter Bob Emmerich of Safe-Con, LLC went through the major hazards in each category and named ways attendees could avoid them. One overarching theme was the importance of construction companies to stay vigilant and establish a culture of adhering to safety standards within each company.

While the safety of its workers should be a compelling enough reason to focus on eliminating these hazards, presenters went over strong financial reasons to do the right thing. Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers indicate that 85 percent of all OSHA citations and 90 percent of all fines are related to the Focus Four. The presentation noted that the average lost-time accident costs a company close to \$38,000.

Companies may want to treat safety information as proprietary and closely guard any facts surrounding a lost-time or fatal incident. Goss believes it's important



*Jim Goss, Senior Vice President,
Construction Safety Management, Inc.*

for companies to share information and for safety professionals to get as much information as they can from instances where things have gone wrong.

"There's a tremendous amount of information out there," he said. "We should share that information, and learn from the mistakes of others. No one should die from the mistakes that we make."

For a copy of the presentation or more on this program, contact Builders Association Director of Client Services Kristin Garcia at 847-318-8585.

Top 11 Focus Four Citations (2008)

Total Dollar Value	Description
\$7,392,987.00	General requirements. Scaffolding
\$7,856,924.00	Duty to have fall protection.
\$1,439,121.00	Ladders.
\$ 958,415.00	Training requirements. Fall Protection
\$1,497,907.00	Aerial lifts.
\$1,030,418.00	Construction - General safety and health provisions.
\$1,793,489.00	Specific Excavation Requirements.
\$ 765,484.00	Head protection.
\$ 562,202.00	Training requirements. Scaffolding
\$ 608,854.00	Electrical, Wiring design and protection.
\$ 375,619.00	Wiring methods, components, and equipment for general use.