

Maintaining Injury Awareness

*Physical Therapy, Injury Prevention
Discussed At August Contractor Safety Forum*

BY BECCA KATZ

To the commercial construction industry, safety is more than a set of regulations, it is a solid program that ensures the health and welfare on the jobsite, contributes to finishing a project on time, on budget and in compliance with state and federal regulations. The Builders Association Safety Forum held Thursday August 14 at the Chicagoland Construction Safety Council afforded attendees the opportunity to share their thoughts and tips on how to keep their workforces as safe as possible.

Facilitated by Bob Smith, chair of the Builders Association Safety Committee, questions were posed to the group for feedback, in addition, Smith offered his own safety insights and examples. Nancy Hauter, OSHA Compliance Assistant Specialist, was also in attendance and spoke about OSHA requirements and standards.

With safety professionals representing small, medium and large companies in attendance, discussions were lively and informative; While certain models and best practices may not have been a good 'fit' for all, attendees were able to glean aspects and elements of some of their peers programs so they might integrate into their own. Donna LaJeunesse of Custom Contracting represented how a small general contractor may be able to tailor her return to work program based on models and examples proffered by some of the larger safety professionals in attendance.

In continuation of the return to work theme, Bob Smith suggested that a lot of companies form a relationship with a rehabilitation or physical therapy center; this relationship allows



for open communication in the treatment process of an injured worker in order to rehabilitate and return to construction site to resume normal tasks. He suggested that by consistently working with a center, a construction company is able to give a detailed description of what needs to be achieved physically to get back on the job for each task they would have to do. In support of this relationship model, Henry DeVries of Tyler Lane Construction and Paul Flentge of Pepper Construction have a pre-employment examination their workers complete at a specific rehab center.

Conversely, Smith warned that working with a specific center to send injured workers decreases insurance options; it is important to keep in mind that if the center does not have many locations, it may preclude some workers to get to their physical therapy due to travel restrictions. He suggested working with a vendor that has offices spread throughout the Chicagoland area avoids this situation. Tom Bitto of Ceco Construction also warned that physicians may not stay in one center for very long and if there

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Get information on current trends in safety and learn how Chicagoland's top contractors are meeting today's safety challenges.

Attend our next

CONTRACTOR SAFETY FORUM,

November 13 at the Chicagoland Construction Safety Council in Hillside.

For more, see www.bldrs.org

Federal Contractors Not Locked In To E-Verify...Yet

An Executive Order issued by President Bush dictated that contractors doing Federal work be enrolled in the E-Verify system to ensure the legality of the workforce on the project. While the rule has been proposed, the AGC of America says its important to realize that the proposal isn't law yet. At this time, E-Verify is still voluntary for contractors wanting to do Federal work.

The Executive Order does kick in for all contractors, however, when the proposed rulemaking is finalized.

Immediate questions the AGC posed regarding the Executive Order included:

- Who is a "contractor" for the purposed of the Order? Does it include subcontractors and suppliers?
- What is the procedure for employers and employees to correct the mistakes that the system will inevitably make?
- How should employers deal with individuals who can satisfy the pre-existing rules and standards – which Congress has written into the Immigration and Nationality Act – but not the E-Verify system?
- What are the penalties for non-compliance?



AGC Leaders Discuss Rising Gas Prices With President

With the steady rise of fuel prices continuing to be a concern, AGC of America leaders met with President Bush to present the construction industry's views on this complex problem.

AGC President Douglas E. Barnhart and CEO Stephen E. Sandherr met with the President in mid-August.

"Construction costs have risen much more than consumer prices this year, due to the extreme run-up in petroleum costs," Barnhart explained during the meeting at the White House, according to an AGC press release. "The producer price index (PPI) for inputs to construction rose 10.4% from June 2007 to June 2008, vs. 5.0% for the consumer price index.

"The national average retail price of on-highway diesel fuel on August 4 was \$4.50 per gallon, up 55% in a year, and 57 cents more than the average for gasoline."

The construction industry has faced unforeseen increases in all construction materials, which are resulting in a reduction in projects and causing job uncertainty.

The AGC was one of eight business associations present at the meeting, and the President remarked that the activities of those associations "have worked to increase the pressure on Congress."

Money Matters



The AGC of America has a number of resources to help you understand how the construction industry is faring both nationally and locally, as well as what those numbers mean to your business. For more on any of the following, visit agc.org:

- *DataDigest*: One of the AGC of America's many newsletters, *DataDigest* is AGC Chief Economist Ken Simonson's periodic look at construction finance on a national scale
- *State Economic Fact Sheets*: Get information on what construction means to the economy in Illinois, and how construction pay in this state compares to others
- *Construction Inflation Alert*: Published twice annually, this includes Simonson's recap of national growth and spending trends within the industry

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are multiple offices, physicians are moving between locations, making it difficult to get consistent treatment and evaluation by the same physician.

The key according to Smith is to, "maintain self-esteem and get them out of the office and into the field because his peers will be the best motivation you can give him." To do so workers to get healthy and ready to re-enter the construction site, Smith encourages employers to be creative in what their return to work program(s); Finding modified tasks or light work on the construction site is a good example of this.

Several safety professionals stated they may assign an injured worker to office work or volunteer projects until they're healthy enough to return to the field. Smith again re-iterated the need to check to insure none of the workers health restrictions are being broken, for example time allowed in a car.

The conversation shifted to some simple things companies do to help keep workers safe and be more prepared if an injury were to occur. Flentge said that Pepper Construction has its workers put a sticker with job name and address of each site that worker is a part of on the inside of their hard hat. That way, when a worker calls 911, he will be able to easily find the address of where he is. Another way to decrease the time it takes for emergency vehicles to arrive is to invite them to come out to the job site early in the construction phase, which will allow the fire sergeant to know where the site is in case of an emergency.

Another simple way to keep everyone safe and to fulfill all regulations is to keep a checklist of posters that need to be up at all construction sites. Several companies have checklists and offered to share with the group.

Additionally, there is currently one poster that combines all required OSHA posters in one.

In conclusion, Smith offered this parting thought:

"There is not an industry that is immune to injury," Smith said, but he went on to stress that the best way to prevent injuries is to educate workers on how all the equipment works because just knowing that they're supposed to use it is not good enough.