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# Lake County Contractors Association Safety News

October, 2003

**Safety Training** – For this month's scheduled classes, check the enclosed Safety Training insert. For more information or to register on-line go to [www.lcca-il.org/events](http://www.lcca-il.org/events). The easiest way to get your employees trained is to let us schedule a class specifically for you. We will make sure the content is tailored to your employees and your industry.

Call Lisa at the LCCA Office for all your safety training needs.

**REMEMBER:** If you have ten or more (or will pay for 10 students) we will bring the training to your office, or a site of your choice, or hold your class at the LCCA Office.

First Aid, CPR, OSHA 10-Hour, Excavation Competent Person, Power Line, Confined Space, Respiratory Safety/Silica, Scaffold User or Competent Person, and much more are available for you. Since the LCCA Safety & Education Fund subsidizes the cost, the price is hard to beat.

Training dates are subject to our instructors' schedules, so if you want a particular date, call the LCCA Office as soon as possible.

**OSHA Forms Alliance with Abbott Labs** – Abbott Laboratories has joined with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to advance safety and health for workers throughout the health care industry.

Abbott signed an Alliance with OSHA during the National Safety Congress and Exposition in Chicago, beginning a collaborative effort to improve safety and health for workers throughout the health care and pharmaceutical industries.

The Alliance calls for the development of information and increased access to training resources. OSHA and Abbott Laboratories will work with business schools to develop and integrate safety and health presentations and business case study materials in MBA-level and executive education seminars. Also, materials that communicate the business value of comprehensive workplace safety and health programs will be developed for inclusion in business school curricula.

Representatives from OSHA and Abbott will participate in forums, roundtable discussions, or stakeholder meetings on health care industry workplace safety and health challenges, and will also speak, exhibit or appear at conferences or at other industry events.

The Alliance also provides OSHA and Abbott with the opportunity to work with stakeholders in the nursing home community to develop practical programs and processes for reducing injuries and illnesses. Finally, both organizations will work with other Alliance participants on specific issues related to the development of safety and health business case studies.

OSHA also entered into Alliances with the National Safety Council and the International Safety Equipment Association at the National Safety Congress.

**All Choked Up Over Drywall Dust?** - Construction workers who sand drywall joint compound are often exposed to high concentrations of dusts and, in some cases, respirable silica, creating potentially serious health problems.

A recent NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluation (HHE) found that drywall sanders were exposed to as much as 10 times the permissible exposure limit (PEL) of 15mg/m<sup>3</sup> for total dust set by OSHA. The OSHA PEL for respirable dust (5mg/m<sup>3</sup>), was also exceeded.

Drywall joint compound manufacturers recognize the problem. A NIOSH study of five manufacturers' material safety data sheets (MSDS's) found that all warned workers to avoid generating dust and to use respiratory protection when dry sanding. Four of the MSDS's told construction workers to use wet sanding whenever possible, and the fifth said to cut dust exposures by ventilations. These guidelines are seldom followed in actual work practice.

Wet sanding is generally avoided because of concerns about drying time and finish texture. When respiratory protection is worn, it is often used incorrectly with little thought to training, proper selection, or fit.

Several lightweight sanding systems are now sold to control drywall workers' sanding exposures. These systems use portable vacuums to capture and remove the dust before the worker is exposed to it. The five commercially available vacuum sanding controls successfully reduced dust exposures by 80-97%, according to a NIOSH comparison. A side benefit to vacuum sanding systems is a cleaner working environment and reduction in clean-up time.

NIOSH study results suggest that the construction workers' dust exposures might be cut simply by changing from hand-sanding to pole-sanding. This change is even more important when working overhead. The pole increases the space between the worker and the sanding surface, which reduces the amount of dust close to the worker's nose and mouth.

**Hazardous Highway Work Zone** – Workers in highway construction work zones are exposed to risk of injury from the movement of construction vehicles and equipment within the work zones, as well as from passing motor vehicle traffic. Recent headlines in local newspapers attest to this fact.

Flaggers and other workers on foot are exposed to the risk of being struck by traffic vehicles or construction equipment; workers who operate construction vehicles or equipment risk injury due to overturn, collision, or being caught in running equipment. Highway workers, regardless of their assigned tasks, work in conditions of low lighting, low visibility, and inclement weather, and may work in congested areas with exposure to high traffic volume and speed.

A National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) publication addresses this problem. Called *Building Safer Highway Work Zones*, this document presents complementary prevention measures to protect workers from hazards posed by construction vehicles and equipment as well as by traffic vehicles. *Building Safer Highway Work Zones* represents a collaborative effort between government, labor, the construction industry, manufacturers, and academia to address worker safety in highway work zones. It is downloadable from the NIOSH web site.

**Scaffold Safety** - If you take your scaffold setup for granted --better think again. OSHA has put unsafe scaffolding on its "Most Wanted" list of safety violations in an effort to reduce the 79 deaths each year caused by bad setup. Fall protection, access, platform construction, guardrails, and proper bracing and support are all cited as key focus areas. Here are some reminders:

#### **Start With a Solid Base**

- Do not build scaffolds without using metal base plates or plywood to support the legs.
- Scaffolds have to be able to support four times more weight than you're going to put on them.
- Do not use wood cribbing to make up for uneven ground.

#### **Install Guardrails and Toe Boards**

- Guardrails (wood or metal) and toe boards have to be put up on all scaffolds more than 10 feet above the ground.
- Guardrails installed on all open ends need to be about 42 inches high with a mid-rail at about 21 inches, just like the guardrails inside the house.
- Toe boards have to be at least 4 inches tall.
- Enclose the opening between the toe board and guardrail with screening to protect workers below you.

#### **Use Proper Planking**

- Planking should be rated "scaffold grade," or if you use framing lumber, pick pieces that are really strong and free of splits and knots.
- Make sure planking extends 6 to 12 inches beyond the end of the scaffold.
- Overlap planks at least 12 inches.
- If you are using pre-made platforms as your planking, make sure they are secured and stay put.
- Pump jack staging is very popular on jobsites because it is fast to set up and you can adjust your work height easily. But these scaffolds also can be dangerous.
- You can only use pump jacks up to 30 feet high, and you cannot load more than 500 pounds onto them.
- Spacing between support posts depends on the type of staging planks you use. If you use wood planks you cannot have posts more than 10 feet apart.
- Wood posts must be made from two straight 2x4s nailed together.
- Posts must be fastened to the wall by special metal bracing manufactured for the systems at the bottom and top and every 10 feet in between. And don't forget to install a guardrail and toe board.
- Only two workers can work on this type of staging at the same time.

**OSHA Fines Wisconsin Contractor** – Failure to provide workers a means to safely exit a construction trench and to assure adequate safety protection inside the trench can be expensive. Dorner-Stahl, Inc., Luxemburg, WI, has found that out the hard way.

They were fined \$235,200 for repeat failure to follow OSHA guidelines. Dorner-Stahl has been inspected 56 times since 1981 with a history of repeat and willful violations of federal workplace safety statutes. This includes eight citations by OSHA in the past for egress from an excavation and 17 times for failing to provide adequate protection to prevent a cave-in. The company was fined a total of \$305,600 by OSHA earlier in 2003 after three inspections revealed dangerous trenching operations.

Dorner-Stahl employs approximately 60 workers primarily involved in installing and repairing underground water and sewer pipe systems. The firm has been in business for 20 years. They have appealed the previous fines.