

Lake County Contractors Association

Safety News

August, 1998

OSHA Inspections Up - OSHA inspections increased almost 8% for the period October 1, 1997 through March 31, 1998. Over 15, 800 inspections were made during the period. This included 75 "significant" cases where penalties were expected to exceed \$100,000, and three egregious cases where employers are cited based on the number of employees exposed to a hazard.

Over half the inspections have been made in the construction industry and the total number of violations cited increased 68%. These increases indicate that OSHA is not only applying its resources on an increased scale, it is also targeting sites where the need is most.

Does OSHA Make A Difference? - According to the Employment Policy Foundation (EPF) -- No! While workplaces have become safer since OSHA's creation, according to the EPF, this would have occurred anyway. In fact, workplace fatalities have been declining for at least 35 years before OSHA. In the 1930's, there were nearly 40 fatalities per 100,000 workers each year. By 1970, the year the OSHAct was passed, the fatality rate had already dropped to 18 and in 1996, the fatality rate was 5. According to the EPF, the reduction in fatalities is more likely due to economic growth that replaces dangerous jobs with safer ones.

EPF also argues that OSHA regulations and inspections have little impact on the fatality rate just because of the nature of workplace fatalities. According to EPF, 60% of all workplace fatalities are caused by highway accidents or workplace violence. Finally, EPF notes that over the last 20 years, the reduction of injuries and illnesses has been approximately 1 to 3 percent. In fact, the incidence of serious workplace injury and illnesses was exactly the same in 1973 as in 1996 -- and non-serious injuries have fallen only slightly.

For more information, visit EPF at their web site at epf.org/index.html.

OSHA Region V Fatality Report - The following fatalities occurred in the Chicago/Milwaukee area during April, May and June of this year:

1. **April 2, 1998** A worker fell from a scaffold. North Area Office
2. **April 17, 1998** An Ironworker fell 20' 6" while walking across a joist. Milwaukee Area Office.
3. **May 6, 1998** A TV cable installer had leaned his ladder against the support cable while working on the TV cable when the hook on the house pulled out causing the installer to fall 18'. Calumet Area Office
4. **May 8, 1998** Three workers were on a roof repairing a skylight when one fell through. North Area Office.
5. **May 14, 1998** Worker was painting lanes when a drunk driver went around the barricade and hit the worker. The worker landed 60 feet from point of impact and was splattered with paint which ignited. Milwaukee Area Office
6. **June 17, 1998** Two workers were standing by a driveway as a truck of loaded refuse was leaving the property when the top gate of the truck hit a portion of the building knocking down a block and concrete wall killing one. Chicago Area Office

Myths and Facts About Alcohol:

Myth: Alcohol is a good nutrient.

Fact: Alcohol is calorically dense. One and a half ounces of 86 proof whiskey contains 105 calories but no protein, vitamins or minerals

Myth: Any good amount of alcohol is good for the heart, even if it has other dangers.

Fact: The latest studies indicate that the maximum benefit to the heart occur with one drink a day.

Myth: Alcohol is so protective that it is okay to smoke, as long as you drink too.

Fact: The dangers of tobacco are more than twice as great as any benefits from alcohol. They wipe out any of the alcohol's advantages.

Myth: Red wine is the best or only alcoholic substance that protects against heart disease.

Fact: Most researchers believe that all forms of liquor are equally effective.

Myth: The cardiac benefits of alcohol are so great that you ought to drink some even if you've never done so before.

Fact: The potential downside of alcohol exceeds all protection against heart disease that it confers. The benefits from alcohol can be obtained without drinking, in ways that have no risks.

Safety News is published by the Lake County Contractors Association's Safety Committee, 1312 Washington St., Waukegan, IL – Mike Barnhart, chairman, Gary L. Dowty, executive vice president. Many articles are submitted for publication and while every effort is made to assure the accuracy of the information, LCCA cannot be held liable for any information presented.