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Lake County Contractors Association Safety News

April, 2004

Safety Training –For information on classes scheduled, or to register on-line go to 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.

LCCA Working On OSHA Alliance – The LCCA Safety Committee, chaired by **Fred Rodheim, Abbott Laboratories**, has been meeting with OSHA in preparation for establishing an Alliance between OSHA and LCCA in the near future. When completed, the Alliance will form a working relationship to provide members with educational programs, training, and other technical assistance that will help protect employees' health and safety.

This is a voluntary cooperative relationship with the association and requires no individual member participation or oversight like Partnerships require. According to Chairman Rodheim, "This Alliance will help strengthen the cooperative attitude between OSHA and LCCA and provide the association with access to OSHA technical and educational assets to help members meet their safety goals."

At the last meeting of the LCCA Board of Governors, the Alliance was unanimously approved and has been forwarded to the Board of Directors for their consideration this month.

High Rate Workplaces Identified – The Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health has alerted approximately 13,000 employers throughout the country that their injury and illness rates are significantly higher than the national average and encourages them to take steps to address safety and health hazards in the workplace.

In a letter this month to those employers, John Henshaw explained that while their rates were higher than most other businesses in the country, the notification was simply a proactive

step to encourage employers to take steps now to reduce the rates and improve safety and health for their employees.

OSHA identified establishments with the nation's highest workplace injury and illness rates based on data reported by 80,000 employers surveyed by the agency last year (that survey collected injury and illness data from calendar year 2002). Workplaces receiving the alert letters had seven or more injuries or illnesses resulting in days away from work, restricted work activity, or job transfers (DART) for every 100 full-time workers. Nationwide, the average U.S. workplace had fewer than three DART instances for every 100 workers.

The good news is that over 1,000 businesses are listed in Illinois, but only a few contractors made the list and none in Lake County! The list for Illinois and Wisconsin is available from the LCCA Office.

Injuries Cost Businesses Almost \$1 Billion Per Week

– While American workplaces are becoming safer, the cost of on-the-job injuries continues to rise, according to the findings of the latest Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index announced recently.

"Managing the significant and growing cost of workplace injuries is a critical challenge facing all companies, regardless of size, industry and location," notes Brian Melas, a senior vice president of commercial insurance at Liberty Mutual. "Improving workplace safety is key to managing this nearly \$1 billion per week impact - prevent the injury, avoid the associated costs. For example, Hard Rock Café's U.S. operation saved almost \$400,000 in 2001 and 2002 by reducing workplace injuries at a faster rate than the restaurant industry as a whole."

The Workplace Safety Index ranks the leading causes of serious on-the-job injuries (those resulting in an employee missing six or more days from work) based on direct-cost payments to injured employees and their medical care providers. The Safety Index can help companies focus their safety efforts by highlighting the causes of the most expensive workplace injuries.

Significant findings from the latest Workplace Safety Index include:

- The financial burden of serious work-related injuries and illnesses grew to \$45.8 billion in 2001 from \$44.2 billion in 2000.
- This cost grew 13.5 percent between 1998 and 2001, or 4 percent after adjusting for inflation in medical and wage benefits.

OSHA Clarifies Recordkeeping

Requirements - In a January 13, 2004, Letter of Interpretation (LOI), OSHA clarifies whether an injury or illness to an employee who is engaged in an activity such as walking or bending is considered work-related. OSHA says a case is presumed work-related under the recordkeeping rule if an event or exposure in the work environment is a discernable cause of the injury or illness. The work event or exposure need only be one of the discernable causes; it need not be the sole or predominant cause.

In each of the eight scenarios referenced in the LOI, the activity engaged in by the employee at the time of the injury (walking, tripping, climbing a staircase, sneezing, bending down) is an "event" which would trigger application of the presumption. In the absence of evidence to overcome the presumption, the injury is work-related.

Thus, in the absence of evidence to overcome the presumption, an ankle injury caused by a trip that occurred while the employee was walking down a level seamless hallway at work is work-related, regardless of whether the accident is attributable to a defect in the hall.

By the same reasoning, if the activity of walking down a hallway caused the employee's knee to buckle or to sprain the ankle, the injury is work-related. If an injury or illness did not result from an identifiable event or exposure in the work environment, but only manifested itself during work, the injury is not work-related, OSHA said. For example, if the employee had a non-occupational event or exposure, and there is no evidence of a work-related event or exposure that was a cause of the injury or illness, the injury should not be recorded.

BLS Reports Workplace Injury and Illness

Rates for 2002 - Approximately 4.7 million injuries and illnesses were reported in private industry workplaces during 2002, according to the latest report by the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The number translates to a rate of 5.3 cases per 100 full-time workers. While that is less than the rate for 2001 (5.7 per 100 workers), the 2002 data cannot be compared with prior years due to revisions of OSHA's Recordkeeping requirements. Still, OSHA Administrator John Henshaw applauded the news saying it was a "further indication of the progress we've achieved in making workers and workplaces safer than ever before."

Assured Equipment Grounding Conductor

Program - Green is this quarter's color for contractors following the assured equipment grounding conductor program. As of April 1, 2004, contractors should be using **Green** tape when marking cords.

The assured equipment grounding conductor program simply requires you to test new or repaired power tools and extension cords before first use, after any suspected damage, and all electrical tools and cords at the three-month intervals, marking the cords with colored tape to indicate the month tested. In addition, all cords and power tools must be visually inspected before each use, and a written description of the program and test records must be kept on file at each jobsite.