



The Safety Frontline

MAY/JUNE 2007

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J&C Safety Consultants Owner Pam Ferrante continues to deliver the message about the impact of the aging workforce wherever she can. Next up is the American Industrial Hygiene Association's National Conference in Philadelphia, PA in early June. On June 3rd she will be delivering a 4-hour Professional Development Seminar. Although registration is closed, the seminar will be filmed by AIHA for DVD sale at a later date – watch our newsletter for information on how to order your copy. She will also be presenting on Monday June 4th at 10:30 AM. For details and registration information go to – www.aihce2007.org

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Springing into Summer

It never fails to amaze me how suddenly summer appears. It was just yesterday that we were finally heralding the end of winter and the cold and looking forward to a reprieve from the long, dark nights. But before we had a chance to enjoy the warmer breezes and longer days, we have run headlong into the heat of summer. We at J&C Safety Consultants are ready to help you deal with whatever the weather brings, so go ahead and give us a call (412.414.4769) or send an email info@jcsafety.com. Let us take some time to show you how you can move safety to the front of your organization, regardless of the weather.

**Keeping it Safe!
Pam**

Update on the New MINER Act

In previous issues we have kept you abreast of changes in the mining industry as a result of the implementation of the MINER Act of 2006. Passed by Congress following a devastating year of mining accidents and fatalities, it was an attempt to strengthen requirements regarding emergency planning and rescue of trapped miners, among other safety issues.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education recently hosted a hearing to evaluate the status of mine safety one year after the incidents at both Sago and Alma. Key testimony was provided by Richard Stickler, MSHA Administrator who vowed that "every single person at MSHA remains focused on our core mission: to improve safety and health of America's miners". He also believed that the changes brought about by the MINER Act were the most sweeping the agency had seen since came into existence over 30 year ago.

Also speaking was the Vice President of the National Mining Association (an industry group), Bruce Waltzman, who testified that over \$159 million has been spent in recent efforts to upgrade mines, specifically in the areas of communications and safety equipment to comply with the MINER Act.

Two differing opinions on the improvements thus far were offered by former MSHA Administrator, J. Davitt McAteer, who is serving as a special advisor to West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin, and by United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts. Both stressed that current efforts have done little, if anything, to improve underground mining safety and continue to leave miners vulnerable to devastating accidents, much like occurred at both Sago and Alma. UMW President Roberts said that, "MSHA's efforts over the past year would do little to change matters today if a mine were to experience an explosion like the one at Sago, or a mine fire like the one at Alma".

Transcripts of the hearing are available at
<http://appropriations.senate.gov/hearings.cfm>

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Frontline's Fast Facts

May, June and July are busy months for various safety-related observances. Here's a brief list of what you can celebrate:

May

1. Clean Air Month
2. Correct Posture Month
3. Occupational Safety and Health Week (May 6-12)

June

1. National Safety Month
2. Home Safety Month
3. Eye Safety Awareness Week (6/27-7/5)

July

1. Eye Injury Prevention Month
2. UV Safety Month

There's something on this list for every safety professional – get out there and have some fun!!! Better yet, find a way to incorporate one of these safety celebrations into your next Safety Committee meeting or Toolbox Talk.

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2004 Workers' Compensation Numbers Released

The National Academy of Social Insurance recently released its annual report on workers' compensation costs for the year 2004. Many interesting trends were discussed in this report. Below is a summary of some that bear noting:

- Employer costs rose 7% to \$87.4 billion, although the total monies spent still represents a substantial decrease of the previous 15 years. Major reforms at the State level are often attributed to this decrease and employers should remember that the workers' compensation market is, like many other insurance markets, cyclical.
- We at J&C have been speaking out for a while now on the impact of the aging workforce – the report suggests there is a trend emerging that creates an unfavorable climate for older workers' ability to qualify for benefits. The report also indicates a reduction in the benefits paid to older workers is occurring. Finally, the report reinforces a trend we have spoken of in many previous presentations; injuries to older workers may not occur as often, but they tend to be more severe, thus impacting the costs of claims and eventually premiums for companies.
- Claims due to injuries from motor vehicle accidents are taking up a larger share of costs. This is, in part, due to the increased likelihood that a vehicle accident will result in more severe injuries. Companies who are being proactive in their fleet management programs are beginning to see a favorable return on their investment related to WC costs.
- One of the lesser discussed impacts of the guest worker programs being proposed by Congress and the President as a means to deal with the immigrant worker issue will be that many of the workers who have come to this country illegally take high hazard jobs and are paid under the table. If the changes in immigration law allow them to gain legal status, employers may be faced with additional workers to insure and at high rates due to the types of jobs they perform.

Even though the climate for workers' compensation costs is favorable for employers at the moment, easing up on the fundamentals of a good safety management program would not be in a company's best interest. As any safety professional will maintain, the benefits of a good safety program far outweigh the costs.

OSHA Gets More Money for FY08

OSHA's budget for FY08 has been targeted for a \$17 million increase by President Bush. OSHA Administrator Edwin G. Foulke, Jr. says the additional monies will go to increase both compliance and enforcement activities by the organization. The Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) is slated to get an additional \$4.6 million while enforcement efforts under both the Enhanced Enforcement Programs as well as the Local and National Special Emphasis Programs will continue to be well supported. The number of projected Federal and State compliance inspections for the Fiscal Year is projected to be 89,700, with 37,700 of them being at the Federal level.

Unfortunately, OSHA has decided to eliminate the popular Susan Harwood Training Grant program, which provides money for targeted training programs implemented at the local level. These programs are often offered as partnerships between labor and educational institutions and have been well received over the years. However, OSHA believes that its current outreach efforts are sufficient to meet the need for information and training at the local level. Many safety membership organizations such as the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) disagree and believe that the program should continue and even be expanded. More details on OSHA's projected FY08 budget are found at their website www.osha.gov.

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Heat Stress Season is Here

Statistics released from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate as many 240 workers die each year from heat-related illnesses, surpassed only by the effects of cold weather. Now that we are seeing an increase in temperatures and humidity levels, it's time to remind ourselves of the deadly effects of heat on our workers.

Sweating is the body's primary means of reducing internal heat; as much as 90% of heat dissipation occurs from sweating. But sweat can't help unless it is removed from the outer surface of the body by evaporation. On humid days or when the body is covered by clothing that traps the moisture, which includes most PPE, the ability to cool the body is substantially reduced. In addition, profuse sweating from exposure to high temperatures removes too many salts from the body and, if not replaced, can cause other heat-related problems.

When a worker's body temperature increases or the balance of fluids is disrupted, they are at risk for the more serious heat-related illnesses – heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat exhaustion is more easily treated by rest, fluids, and removing the worker from the hot environment. However, heat stroke is a medical emergency requiring immediate medical assistance, as the body's core temperature is rising so rapidly that brain functions may shut down, leading to convulsions, coma and even death.

Besides reminding workers early in the season about the dangers of heat-related illnesses and setting up a buddy system to watch each other, safety professional can make good use of the Heat Index, developed by the National Weather Service. This Index takes into account the various factors that impact the likelihood of heat related illness and establishes categories of danger that can be used to establish rest and recovery periods in hot environments. This Heat Index can be access by going to the National Weather Service's website at www.srh.noaa.gov/elp/wxcalc/heatindex.shtml. In addition, OSHA offers a Heat Stress Quick Card at their website. These pocket sized cards can be printed out and handed out to workers and provide easy reminders of the dangers of heat stress, as well as how to prevent and treat it.

FRONTLINE'S FAST FREEBIES



Who says you can't get something for nothing? In every issue we will bring you two freebies. Go get 'em!

1. Liko, Inc. has created an online calculator that can be used to determine the potential Return on Investment (ROI) for developing a Safe Lifting Program for hospital or healthcare facilities. By entering basic data on number of beds and FTE's, it generates a custom report on savings that may be generated. Try it out at www.SafeLiftingPortal.com/calculator.
2. White Papers can be a good source of intensive information on a specific subject. A safety consulting company called EH&E has released a White Paper designed to aid safety professionals at colleges and universities improve their laboratory compliance programs: "Three Proven Strategies for Upgrading Your Laboratory Environmental Health & Safety Program". The paper tries to identify cost effective strategies that are also low cost. Download a copy of the paper at www.eheinc.com/labprogram.htm.

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