

## **FACT SHEET: HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSTRUCTION**



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Construction is defined to include constructing, reconstructing, altering, maintaining, moving, rehabilitating, repairing, renovating or demolition of any building, structure or improvement or relating to the excavation of or other development or improvement to land.

### **QUICK STATISTICS: United States**

(Bureau of Labor Statistics)

- Fatal work injuries in the private construction sector declined by 16 percent in 2009 following a decline of 19 percent in 2008.
- Half of all fatal falls occur in construction, so the decline in overall construction activity and employment since 2007 may account for the lower number of fatal falls over the past 2 years.
  - Private construction fatalities are down by more than a third since reaching a series high in 2006.
  - Economic conditions may explain much of this decline with total hours worked having declined 17 percent in construction in 2009, after a decline of 10 percent the year before.
- Fatalities involving contact with objects or equipment were down 22 percent in 2009 after increasing in 2008, and fatal work injuries involving exposure to harmful substances or environments (such as electrocutions) were down 11 percent.
- While workers in construction incurred the most fatal injuries of any industry in the private sector in 2009, the number of fatalities in construction declined 16 percent in 2009 after a decline of 19 percent in 2008.
- Fatal injuries involving workers in the construction of buildings were down 27 percent from 2008, with most of the decrease occurring in nonresidential building construction (down 44 percent to 55 cases).
- Heavy and civil engineering construction was down 12 percent, and the subsector with the largest number of fatal work injuries, specialty trade contractors, had 16 percent fewer fatalities in 2009 than in 2008.

### **QUICK STATISTICS: New York**

(Bureau of Labor Statistics and New York City Department of Buildings)

- Lowest number of work-related fatalities reported in New York City since the start of the BLS fatality census in 1992
- 28% drop in New York City construction accidents during 2010
- 157 construction-related accidents in 2010 compared to 218 construction accidents in 2009.
- Fatal construction accidents were down 78% in 2010 with only four of the 157 accidents resulting in fatalities.
- Injuries were down 31% with 165 reported injuries in 2010 compared to 241 injuries in 2009.
  - The Department of Buildings attributes the decline in construction injuries and fatalities to increased regulation, a heightened awareness of safety, and a 7% decline in application for new construction permits.

## **Main Causes of Fatal Injuries**

(Occupational Health and Safety Administration)

- Falls: number one construction killer is falling from heights, principally due to inadequate edge protection
- Fatal crush injuries and being struck by falling objects: "caught in/between;" "struck by" equipment, machinery or other moving objects
- Electrocutations

## **Most Common Health Problems Caused by Physical Stress**

(Center for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Deafness: Caused by exposure to hazardous noise levels
- Vibration syndromes: Hand-arm vibration can cause damage to blood vessels and nerves.
- Back injuries: Caused by manual handling of heavy loads, confined spaces, or awkward postures
- Other muscular-skeletal disorders: Physically demanding work can cause bursitis, tenosynovitis, tendonitis, neck problems or epicondylitis

## **Environmental Causes of Illness**

(International Labor Organization)

- Exposure to hazardous substances:
  - Solvents can cause central nervous system damage and can harm the skin, liver, kidneys and cardiovascular system. Some solvents increase the likelihood of cancer, and can reduce fertility, cause birth defects or miscarriages.

- Isocyanides can cause asthma and dermatitis. In the long term, they are associated with cancer and reproductive hazards.
- Pesticides present reproductive hazards.
- Dust: Cement dust, silica, wood dust, medium-density fiber boards and asbestos can cause respiratory disease and some types of lung and stomach cancers.

## **Potential Union Action—Protection of workers/Awareness-raising/Information exchange**

(Brooke Lierman "To Assure Safe and Healthful Working Conditions")

Education  
Retaliation Protection  
Inspection Facilitation  
Employer Abatement  
Grievance Process

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