

Covering the Industry's News



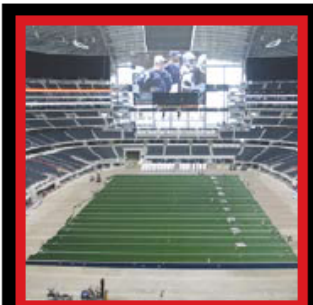
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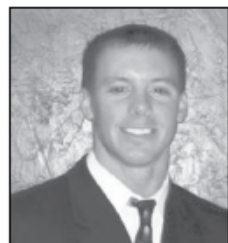
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This Month

Construction Safety



Safety crucial to development, growth

Kraig Kyle, Construction Health and Safety Technician
CORE Safety Group
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How does construction safety impact your company?

Economically, morally and legally, safety has become a major issue for construction companies. Addressing environmental, safety and health issues has meant survival for our clients attempting to remain profitable in this ever-more-competitive economy. With an ever-increasing rise in medical and indemnity cost, construction companies are paying a larger percentage of their payroll to provide coverage for their workers. The overall effect can lead to a high experience modification rate and a higher insurance premium in addition to related turnover and overhead cost.

What are the major safety risks associated with construction?

Construction in itself is inherently dangerous. According to OSHA statistics the construction industry makes up approximately 21 percent of all work related fatalities. Construction workers come upon various hazards including falls from heights, struck by objects, caught in between objects and electrocutions. The reality is that construction workers face all of these and more every day they walk onto a jobsite. These risks are multiplied with today's construction demands. Tight schedules, limited bud-

gets and lofty expectations from developers and owners often make it tempting for companies to bypass critical safety training needs and proper analysis of jobsite hazards in order to meet these obligations.

How important is a good safety record in the construction industry?

A good safety record is not only crucial to a company's bottom line but also in its development and growth. Companies with poor safety records are viewed as unstable and typically do not last long

in the construction industry. Successful companies know that a good safety record will not only reduce their insurance premiums, but will also increase employee productivity and job capability.

Companies with a strong safety record and commitment to safe work practices have less labor turnover and thus reduce training and accidents cost. Additionally a good record shows a company's ability to analyze, plan and monitor cost effectively, which can create new and larger job opportunities.

Does an increase in volume of construction affect safety?

Certainly, and although we have the reverse effect occurring in today's economy, during a construction boom, as we had in the mid-2000's, finding enough man-power can become a larger obstacle then actually landing the bid on a big project. With that said, employers have less time to train new and unskilled employees on critical safety procedures and policies. In addition companies often have to dig deep into their graveyards for equipment and materials. Cranes, scaffolds and other out-dated or poorly maintained equipment are put back into ser-

vice in order to keep up with production demands.

What is on the horizon for the safety industry?

Look for legislation to step up safety requirements and enforcement among the construction industry. Recently several states including Nevada, Missouri and New York have set various standards requiring workers and supervisors to obtain the OSHA 10- and 30-hour certification prior to commencing work on construction projects. I see several additional state programs following suit. Additionally Senator Ted Kennedy introduced a bill (Senate bill 1580) that will amend the Occupational Safety and Health Act and would, among other things "expand coverage under the Act to 8.5 million in the public sector who are not covered by an OSHA state plan, increase protections for whistleblowers, and increase penalties for certain violators.

Kraig Kyle serves as safety director for the southwest region for CORE Safety Group and provides general contractors including EMJ Corporation with health and safety services.