

Safety 2008: Safety Engineers Address Rising Hispanic Workplace Injuries

Jun 11, 2008 12:00 AM, By Sandy Smith

Dr. John Howard, director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and OSHA Administrator Edwin Foulke Jr. addressed a meeting of the American Society of Safety Engineers' (ASSE) Safety Professionals and the Latino Workforce (SPALW) group on June 10 in Las Vegas on the growing number of Hispanic worker injuries.

This meeting was part of Safety 2008, the annual ASSE Professional Development Conference and Exposition.

Recent NIOSH and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show that in the United States from 2003 to 2006, 34 percent of Hispanic worker deaths occurred in the construction industry. Work-related injury deaths among Hispanic workers from 1992 to 2006 totaled 11,303, approximately 13 percent of all U.S. work-related injury deaths during that period. In 2006, the work-related injury death rate for Hispanic workers was 5.0 per 100,000 Hispanic workers, compared with rates of 4.0 for all workers, 4.0 for non-Hispanic white workers and 3.7 for non-Hispanic black workers.

"We have reduced the rate of fatalities for Hispanics, but the numbers have gone up" due to larger numbers of Hispanics in the workforce, said Foulke. "We need best practices, training programs and model policies" to help reduce the numbers.

NIOSH notes that inadequate knowledge and control of recognized safety hazards and inadequate training and supervision of workers, often exacerbated by different languages and literacy levels of workers, contributed to higher numbers of work-related injury deaths among Hispanic workers.

ASSE Safety 2008 offered a number of sessions to address these issues, including "How to Implement a Behavior-Based Auditing Program for Your Spanish-Speaking Workforce," courses in Spanish, "Are You Prepared to Effectively Train Your Hispanic Workers?" "Establishing an OSHA Outreach Training Program in Latin-America: A Case Study in Quito, Ecuador" and "Bridging Cultural Differences."

One member of the SPALW group noted two main concerns facing safety, health and environmental professionals who work with the Hispanic workforce appear to be 1) the ability to effectively communicate with each other due to differences in language and literacy levels, and 2) that many times cultural difference lead to

misinterpretation of directions and intent. Hard feelings can occur with a loss in rapport and trust.

The SPALW group, ASSE and its general membership continue to work to prevent work-related injury deaths among all workers including Hispanics. SPALW members' goal is to educate employers about the need and the economic benefits for providing a safe work environment; provide employers of Hispanic workers with safety information; and to identify and develop additional materials culturally appropriate and effective for workers who speak different languages and have varying levels of literacy.

ASSE, SPALW, OSHA, NIOSH and many employers including city and counties countrywide provide resources and tools to help increase workplace safety for Hispanic workers and for their families. These include Spanish-language occupational safety and health materials and training information. For more information, visit http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5722a1.htm?s_cid=mm5722a1_e.

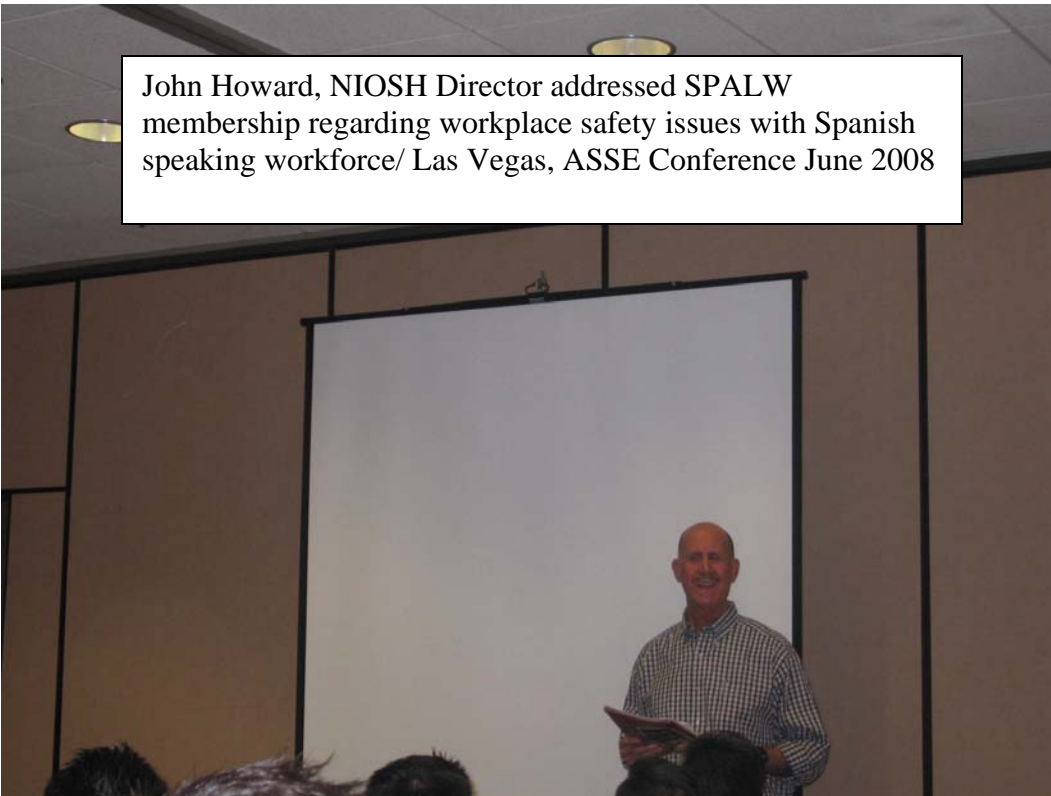
To learn more about fatal injuries for Hispanic workers, read [Hispanic Workers Face Higher Fatality Rates](#).



Acting OSHA Director Foulk, presents Hector Escarcega
SPALW Chairman, along with Zef Banda and Ernie Garcia
Las Vegas, ASSE Conference June 2008



John Howard, NIOSH Director addressed SPALW
membership regarding workplace safety issues with Spanish
speaking workforce/ Las Vegas, ASSE Conference June 2008



Hector Escarcega, SPALW Chair congratulates SPALW Executive board from left to right: Ernie Garcia, Diana Cortez, Zef Banda/ Las Vegas, ASSE Conference June 2008

