

Construction trades learning safety as a second language

Efforts speak to Hispanics and their high injury rates

BY LOUISE ESOLA

Hispanic and Latino workers' high rate of on-the-job injuries and deaths in construction has sparked a new resource for an industry with a workforce that is more than one-quarter Hispanic.

"Over the last year, there has been a lot of concern over the Latino workforce because there have been a lot of injuries," said Jorge Otalora, Vienna, Virginia-based division safety director at Hoar Construction L.L.C., a commercial builder of retail, health care, governmental, industrial and entertainment facilities nationwide. "These numbers have been increasing over the years."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the construction industry topped all other industries in fatal on-the-job injuries in 2014, the latest data available. Construction had a rate of 9.8 deaths per 100,000 workers — nearly triple the rate for all full-time workers. Of the roughly 900 Hispanics or Latinos fatally injured on the job in 2014, about two-thirds were born outside the United States (see box).

There also were nearly 201,000 construction-related injuries in 2014, according to BLS.

For executives such as Mr. Otalora, who oversees construction sites with up to 80% Hispanic workers, this trend has prompted the company to present safety procedures in Spanish as well as English.

In addition, the Park Ridge, Illinois-based American Society of Safety Engineers and the Silver Spring, Maryland-based Center for Construction Research & Training in March jointly released a set of Spanish-language safety instructions and training materials under their existing Safety Toolbox Talks offering.

The effort piggybacks on what the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration has offered employers since convening its first National Action Summit for Latino Workers Health and Safety in 2010, according to a Washington-based OSHA spokeswoman.

"Latino workers suffer and die on the job at a greater rate while doing the hardest, most unhealthy, most dangerous jobs," she said. "Many of these workers don't know they have a right to work in a safe and healthful workplace. Most are untrained in addressing workplace hazards, and many face discrimination because of language barriers."

OSHA also has developed alliances with non-profit and community organizations and

devised a Spanish-language web page with materials and publications for what the OSHA spokeswoman and others refer to as the most vulnerable set of workers in the United States. It also provides free on-site consultation for firms seeking health and safety advice.

Providing safety materials in Spanish is something that many mid-size and larger firms such as Hoar Construction — which employs up to 500 full-time workers at a time but also relies on hundreds of contractors — use routinely, Mr. Otalora said.

"We have had a bilingual safety department with managers who have translated safety materials" for a number of years, he said. "What we've seen is that the workers are more aware of the hazards and more easily identify issues and correct them before it actually becomes an injury."

To ASSE President Michael Belcher, this is precisely what the industry needs.

"There's a real shortage of safety professionals in the marketplace," Mr. Belcher said. "The Safety Toolbox helps bridge that gap when small businesses, in particular, don't have any other resources available."

The free Safety Toolbox Talks, introduced two years ago, have seen hundreds of thousands of downloads. As of late May, the Spanish version introduced this year had already been downloaded 2,000 times, said Eileen Betit, director of research to practice at the Center for Construction Research & Training.

Included in the online resource are 52 publications that are printable and easy to navigate, with illustrations and bullet points. They cover everything from working with a forklift and other heavy equipment to dealing with the risks of asphalt fumes and carbon monoxide poisoning, falling objects on a construction site and protecting their eyes.

This resource, which Mr. Otalora said has already been employed by several construction worksites, covers basic safety rules and procedures for workers exposed to falls, electrical and weather hazards, he said.

"We have people working all summer long in high temperatures," he said. "This covers all the risks for heat stroke, for example. If you have that information in your own language, you can understand what is happening before it becomes a catastrophic problem."

"We encourage people to employ the advice from professionals," Mr. Belcher said. "Our goal is to create a safe workplace. It's not a sustainable practice to be putting people at risk."

WORKPLACE INJURIES & DEATHS

3,000,000

There were nearly 3 million nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses in U.S. private industry in 2014, nearly 201,000 of which were in construction.

4,800

There were more than 4,800 fatal workplace injuries, with construction accounting for the biggest percentage of the total with 899 — the highest number since 2008.

9.8:100,000

Construction had a fatal injury rate of 9.8 per 100,000 workers versus a rate of 3.4 for all full-time workers.

800

There were more than 800 Hispanic or Latino workers involved in fatal workplace injuries, with more than half born in Mexico or elsewhere in Central America.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Safety consultants	4
Occupational health consultants	8
Industrial hygiene consultants	1
ASSE members	5

CLIENTS

Total	10
Corporate/institutional	15

SAFETY CONSULTING SERVICES: Benchmarking, ergonomic program assistance, expert witness, industrial hygiene, occupational health program assistance, off-site training, on-site training, OSHA and DOT audits, safety audits/reviews, school violence programs, workplace violence programs.

SAFETY RESEARCH AND OTHER SERVICES: Development of training materials, ergonomic research, OSHA compliance, safety manuals, videos.

SPECIALTIES: Construction, education, government, health care providers, manufacturing, oil/energy, transportation, utilities.

COMPENSATION: By the hour, by the project, on retainer.

SERVICE AREA: International

OFFICERS: Ronald W. Porter, CEO.

CONTACT: Michael Dubin, operations manager.

Carl Berkowitz

239 Lands End Court
Moriches, NY 11955
631-878-7419
www.transportationexpertwitness.com

FOUNDED: 1995

2015 REVENUE

Total gross revenue	\$200,000
Safety consulting	\$200,000

STAFF

Total	4
Safety consultants	4
ASSE members	1

CLIENTS

Total	300
Corporate/institutional	5

SAFETY CONSULTING SERVICES: Expert witness, on-site training, OSHA and DOT audits, safety audits/reviews, safety program assistance to employers, workplace violence programs.

SAFETY RESEARCH AND OTHER SERVICES: Development of training materials, ergonomic research, OSHA compliance, safety manuals.

SPECIALTIES: Transportation

COMPENSATION: By the hour, by the project, on retainer.

BRANCH OFFICES: Delray Beach, Florida; Los Angeles; New York; Spain.

SERVICE AREA: United States, international.

OFFICERS: Carl Berkowitz, CEO.

CONTACT: Carl Berkowitz

Bureau Veritas S.A.

1601 Sawgrass Corporate Parkway, Suite 400
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33323
888-357-7020; fax: 954-236-8108
www.us.bureauveritas.com

FOUNDED: 1828

PARENT: Bureau Veritas Holdings Inc.

2015 REVENUE

Total gross revenue	\$5,127,000,000
Safety consulting	\$710,200,000

STAFF

Total	6,600
Safety consultants	6,201
Occupational health consultants	860
Industrial hygiene consultants	895
ASSE members	50

CLIENTS

Total	49,000
Corporate/institutional	48,500

SAFETY CONSULTING SERVICES: Benchmarking, ergonomic program assistance, expert witness, industrial hygiene, occupational health program assistance, off-site training, on-site training, OSHA and DOT audits, safety audits/reviews, safety program assistance to employers.

SAFETY RESEARCH AND OTHER SERVICES: Development of training materials, ergonomic research, fire protection engineering, industrial hygiene laboratory, industrial hygiene research, newsletters, noise research, occupational health research, OSHA compliance, product liability research, rehabilitation, safety manuals, videos.

SPECIALTIES: Associations, chemical, construction, education, financial services, global companies, government, health care providers, manufacturing, nonprofits, oil/energy, professional services, real estate, retail, technology, transportation, utilities.

COMPENSATION: By the hour, by the project, on retainer.

BRANCH OFFICES: More than 1,400 locations in 140 countries

SERVICE AREA: International

OFFICERS: David A. Prince Jr., COO.

CONTACT: H. Kent Cheese, vice president-sales, 303-378-4353; Joseph Halberda, marketing manager, 843-584-5477.

C

CHESS Inc.

33 E. Wentworth Ave.
West St. Paul, MN 55118
651-481-9787
www.chess-safety.com

FOUNDED: 1995

2015 REVENUE

Total gross revenue	\$450,000
Safety consulting	\$450,000

STAFF

Total	7
Safety consultants	4
Industrial hygiene consultants	1
ASSE members	2

CLIENTS

Total	166
Corporate/institutional	150

SAFETY CONSULTING SERVICES: Benchmarking, ergonomic program assistance, industrial hygiene, off-site training, on-site training, OSHA and DOT audits, safety audits/reviews, safety program assistance to employers, workplace violence programs.

SAFETY RESEARCH AND OTHER SERVICES: Development of training materials, newsletters, OSHA compliance, safety manuals.

SPECIALTIES: Government, manufacturing.

COMPENSATION: By the hour, by the project, on retainer.

SERVICE AREA: United States

OFFICERS: Carol Keyes, president; Janet Keyes, vice president.

CONTACT: Carol Keyes

Claims Administrative Services Inc.

501 Shelley Drive
Tyler, TX 75701
800-765-2412; fax: 903-509-1888
www.cas-services.com

FOUNDED: 1990

PARENT: Heartland Security Insurance Group

2015 REVENUE

Total gross revenue	\$15,047,019
Safety consulting	\$1,450,075

STAFF

Total	9
Safety consultants	8
Industrial hygiene consultants	1
ASSE members	2

CLIENTS

Total	416
Corporate/institutional	415

SAFETY CONSULTING SERVICES: Benchmarking, ergonomic program assistance, expert witness, industrial hygiene, occupational health program assistance, off-site training, on-site training, OSHA and DOT audits, safety audits/reviews, safety program assistance to employers, school violence programs, workplace violence programs.

SAFETY RESEARCH AND OTHER SERVICES: Development of training materials, ergonomic research, fire protection engineering, industrial hygiene research, newsletters, noise research, occupational health research, OSHA compliance, product liability research, rehabilitation, safety manuals, videos.

SPECIALTIES: Associations, chemical, construction, education, financial services, global companies, government, health care providers, manufacturing, nonprofits, oil/energy, professional services, professional sport teams, real estate, retail, technology, transportation, utilities.

COMPENSATION: By the hour, by the project, on retainer.

BRANCH OFFICES: Dallas; El Paso, Texas.

SERVICE AREA: United States

OFFICERS: William S. Costanza, president; Barry L. Jones, executive vice president; Mark Davenport, vice president-business development/risk services; Sheila Darland, vice president-customer service.

CONTACT: Mark Davenport