

Front Lines

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Health, Safety and Environment Newsletter published by the United Steelworkers and the Tony Mazzocchi Center

Welcome to the USW/TMC Frontlines

This is the first issue of an e-newsletter that will be sent to HSE activists and other USW members engaged in health and safety issues.

Frontlines will focus on keeping readers current on recent accidents and incidents, H & S events within and outside the USW/TMC community, success stories of locals and Districts, pending legislation, NIOSH news, H & S publications of interest, view-

points on H & S issues and, with time, reader comments and letters. You will receive it periodically as the news demands.

We aim to keep you on the frontlines of health and safety with this newsletter. Welcome and let us know what you think.

In solidarity

Jim Frederick, Mike Gill

Earth Day 2009

“In the old days, we thought that smoke meant jobs. That pollution was a byproduct of prosperity. And that if the air smelled funny, and the mill killed all the fish in the river, such was the price of progress. Besides, you could always get away on the weekend to a place where the air was pure, the lake was clean and the fishing was good.”- USWA’s Our Children’s World, 1990

This first issue of the USW/TMC is coming to you on Earth Day -2009. Earth Day was started in 1970 by Senator Gaylord Nelson, (D) Wisconsin, who struggled to make the environment a political issue throughout his career.

As a result of a heightened awareness about our environment in part through the work of Rachel Carson, Senator Nelson began his efforts in 1962 with a focus on environmental conservation. He organized a nationwide grassroots demonstration for the environment on April 22, 1970. The response was electric! On that first Earth Day, twenty million demonstrators, thousands of schools and local communities participated in a national teach-in on environmental problems.

Unions and workers have long been involved with environmental issues. For example, in 1948 a tempera-

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Earth Day 2009

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ture inversion trapped industrial pollution from the Donora Zinc Works and the American Steel and Wire plant. At least 70 people died from exposure to the pollution and the Steelworkers donated \$10,000 toward a health study. In 1973, the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers union struck Shell Oil for workplace health, safety and environmental issues. A nationwide boycott was initiated against Shell products, consumers mailed in their Shell credit cards, and, for the first time, many environmental, health and community groups supported the strike.

The USW and our members take environmental issues seriously. In most cases our members breathe and are exposed to the contaminants that become environmental pollution before it leaves the workplace. Our members know about these hazards and often know how to reduce and eliminate them!

For many generations, labor and environmental groups were at odds, primarily because of the false belief that we can't protect the environment and still

have jobs. However, today unions and environmental groups are working more closely to address issues.

The Blue/Green Alliance is taking up the challenge of that first Earth Day. USW is a founder, along with the Sierra Club, and one of six members of the Alliance which supports green jobs and alternate energy sources. The partnership recently announced support for comprehensive climate change legislation. The legislation is an effective way to rapidly put millions of Americans back to work building a clean energy economy and to reduce global warming emissions to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

Other members of the Blue/Green Alliance include the Natural Resource Defense Council, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), and the Communication Workers of America (CWA).

Today, Earth Day is celebrated throughout the world and there is no one group organizing activities for the country. There are numerous organizations involved and every community will host events.

District 2 Kevin Wilson Initiative, Making the Difference for Safer Workplaces

By Steve Doherty Local 1096, District 2 CATS Team

Following the tragic death in September 2007 of 26 year old Local 1900 member Kevin Michael Wilson, the leadership of District 2 has made safety in our workplaces a top priority. In a letter to the District 2 Leadership, the Wilson family stated:

"The loss of our son to a workplace accident has been by far the hardest thing we have ever had to bear. Nobody should have to die while performing their job. The pain and suffering caused by workplace accidents doesn't end with the employee who is involved, it devastates their family, friends and coworkers."

The District 2 Kevin Wilson Initiative was formed in early 2008. District 2 Director Michael Bolton has made workplace safety a top priority. Director Bolton's statement sets the tone for safety in his district. "Companies accepting the fact that our members are injured or killed at work must end. The hazard mapping training we have been doing was a great first step – now we need to educate our members further so that we can assist them in providing safer workplaces. Our

newly developed Safety Team will provide that education for our members and will assist us in making our workplaces safer."

**Dedicated to the
memory of Kevin
Michael Wilson
1981-2007**



With strong support from District 2 leadership in partnership with the USW's Tony Mazzocchi Center (TMC) grant program, a district wide pilot program driven by a rank and file Coordination, Adaptation, Training, and Support (CATS) team was formed. Paul Footit, Dist. 2 Safety Coordinator and the CATS Team have utilized the resources from the District and guidance from the TMC's Mike Gill and Gary Morris to create a strong base of rank and file trainers to set goals, promote, and support the training initiative throughout District 2.

Embraced by the membership, the initial training in

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District 2 Kevin Wilson Initiative

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Hazard Mapping has resulted in the combination of over 2,500 members of our locals and management-trained in Hazard Mapping in 2008. Locals use rank and file trainers, class materials provided by the TMC grant program and the small group activity training method. Including management members in the training improves communication and awareness of the everyday hazards and provides a system to jointly reduce and eliminate them. Mike Rayome, HR Manager at Graphics Pkg. sums this up: "Hazard Mapping isn't about laying blame on anyone; it is about identifying hazards, and more importantly, setting up a plan to address the open items through a joint effort."

Currently over 1400 members of NewPage Locals 2-21, 2-359, and 2-116 in Escanaba MI, Stevens Point WI, and Whiting WI mills are being trained by rank and file trainers from their own facility. Wes Krause, a worker trainer from Local 2-116, training at his local has this to say. "Hazard Mapping has really empowered the people, gotten them involved with safety." Local

President Rick Bahr states, "Local 2-469 Appleton WI has trained close to 100 members of the local and management in Hazard Mapping. "Developing hazard maps for many areas of our plant has helped us identify and locate hazards for elimination. After a recent serious injury, this group eliminated over 65% of the hazards in that area after Hazard Mapping this section on the machine and recommending their fixes to the area". Jim Gregory, Sheet Finishing Cell Manager from Appleton has seen the benefits from our worker led trainings. "Hazard Mapping has been an excellent tool to proactively identify risk exposures by engaging the operating crews."

While the hazard mapping is just setting the foundation for safer workplaces; eventually near miss, accident investigation, and more specialized training will follow. The systems based training offered in District 2, in conjunction with TMC support empowers our members to achieve a safer work place, and has been a great tool to rally the locals around. District 2 Safety is "Making the Difference."

Incident at Sunoco Inc., Marcus Hook Injures Four, Including Two OSHA Inspectors

The following is the Executive Report of the incident from Don Kraut, TOP Representative, Local 10-901.

On Tuesday, March 31, at approximately 11:51 AM the "shot pot" used for walnut shell cleaning of the Fluid Catalytic Cracking Unit (FCC) Power Recovery Train (PRT) expander failed, causing injuries to two employees and two OSHA compliance officers. The Emergency Response Team at the refinery responded to and secured the scene. The two employees received first aid treatment at the refinery medical facility and were released back to work at full duty. The two OSHA compliance officers were transported from the scene to an area hospital, treated for minor injuries and released a few hours later.

Events:

The walnut shell cleaning is a preventive maintenance measure for the FCC PRT expander and is normally performed on a monthly basis. The OSHA officers were observing the activity on March 31 as part of the ongoing NEP Inspection, under the supervision of H&S personnel and in coordination with

Operations.

Note: The NEP Inspection is part of OSHA's National Emphasis Program for Refineries, an inspection that focuses upon process safety procedures.

The operator had just performed steps to pressurize the shot pot with nitrogen and was reaching to open the shot pot outlet valve to deliver walnut shells to the carrier line when the pot failed suddenly. The lid, legs, valves, connections and contents separated from the pot and were displaced varying distances, while the pot itself was displaced several yards. The operator and three observers were struck by objects, suffering abrasions, contusions and bruises. Immediately after the incident the operator blocked the inlet line to the expander, and the nitrogen line isolating the equipment.

Additional Activities:

A TOP investigation of this incident is underway to determine the root causes of the incident. This maintenance activity has been suspended and is under review at all company refineries.

Nibarger Trains Nigerian Oil Workers in Union Building through Health and Safety

Kim Nibarger, health, safety and environment specialist, recently returned from a four-day training class he conducted for Nigerian oil workers in Abuja, Nigeria.

This was Nibarger's second trip to Nigeria and the third training session. One was conducted at the Labor College in Washington DC when a group of Nigerian oil workers traveled to the US. One of his earlier visits was made to the Delta region, site of the oil refineries and a region full of unrest from ethnic minorities who feel exploited by the foreign oil companies.

The trips are sponsored by Solidarity Center, a non-profit AFL-CIO organization that builds a global labor movement by strengthening the economic and political power of workers through effective and democratic unions.

"It is critical to build alliances with groups like the Nigerian Oil Workers" said Nibarger. "They bargain with the same multi-national employers we bargain

with. They face the same problems and together, we can develop solidarity across the globe."

And Nigeria is an important country. It is the eighth most populous country in the world; it is the 12th largest provider of oil in the world and has the 10th largest oil reserves.

Nibarger offered a menu of approaches to assessing workplace hazards. He covered mapping techniques and found that Nigerian workers' life maps showed the same concerns as U. S. workers: they felt overworked, tired, stressed.

They immediately "got" systems of safety and Nibarger spent many hours going through questions on aspects of safety systems.

Kim Nibarger is uniquely qualified to present this type of training. Before joining the USW staff, he spent many years as a refinery operator at a Shell refinery in Anacortes, WA.

Editorial

Frontlines welcomes guest editorials from readers. If you want to submit an editorial on a subject, send it to: www.uswtmc.org/safety

Employer Safety Awards for Low Injury Rates – Recognition for Safety Success or Part of a Safety Nightmare?

Employer Safety Awards for Low Injury Rates – Recognition for Safety Success or Part of a Safety Nightmare?

Many employers continue to post lower and lower injury rates, meaning that few or no injuries are being recorded on the employer's OSHA log of injuries and illnesses.

Sometimes fewer recorded injuries result from improved safety conditions. But many times they are the result of employer policies and programs that discourage workers from reporting injuries. Workers who don't report an injury may receive a gift card or a chance to win a big screen T.V.; or they may be threatened with discipline if they do report injuries.

Last year Congressman George Miller, Chair of U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor, convened a hearing and released a report "Hidden Tragedy: Underreporting of Workplace Injuries and Illnesses" documented that up to 70% of job injuries and illnesses go unrecorded. The report presented four employer incentives to underreport workplace injuries and illnesses: low injury/illness rates decrease the chance of having an OSHA inspection, they decrease workers' compensation claims, they can earn businesses and supervisors bonuses, and they look good to customers and the public.

"It's great to strive for zero injuries in the workplace, but we know that this can only really be achieved when

the union and our members are involved in safety and systems are in place to identify and fix unsafe workplace conditions," said Jim Frederick of the USW Health, Safety and Environment Department. "Many times our members are placed in untenable situations where they feel they are risking discipline by reporting an injury. Well meaning supervisors can also be pressured to show fewer recorded injuries, or find a new job."

Prize and discipline programs may violate the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which prohibits employers from discriminating against workers who report job injuries. In addition, a company plan for instituting safety prize or discipline programs should be met with a union's demand to bargain -- these programs and policies are mandatory subjects of bargaining.

Help is available to local unions to address these policies and programs from the USW Health, Safety & Environment Department 412-562-2581; safety@usw.org. "The numbers games being played today serve to hide injuries and hazards, and make workplaces more dangerous. A true measure of safety improvement would be to identify hazards and track how many of them get eliminated, reduced or prevented," said Nancy Lessin of USW's Tony Mazzocchi Center. Call today to start a tracking program for hazard reduction at your workplace. Next year, the local can award itself a Safety Award for the program results.

USW/TMC Staff Attend Sydney Dekker Conference on “Human Error, Just Culture and Resiliency”

“Not a silver bullet”, in spite of many very good points, was the conclusion of the five USW/TMC health and safety staff members attending Sydney Dekker’s April 8-9 two-day workshop in Washington, D. C. The audience was composed primarily of representatives of government agencies.

Jim Frederick, Health, Safety and Environment

Assistant Director, Nancy Lessin, Jim Novak, Kim Nibarger, and Steve Sallman, staff members from the Health, Safety and Environment attended the conference.

Future issues will combine Dekker’s perspective of avoiding the “blame the worker” pitfall with other experts on the subject.

USW/Queens College WHPP Annual Meeting Marks Ten Years of Medical Testing for Former and Current Nuclear Weapons Plant Workers

The Worker Health Protection Program, (WHPP) marked its 10th anniversary of medical testing in 2009. The medical testing program is run cooperatively by USW, Queens College, ATLC and CPS for former and current workers at Department of Energy nuclear weapons plants sites, The WHPP Annual Meeting in Washington, D. C. March 30-April 1 celebrated the occasion with plaques honoring the DOE program sponsors and two Queens project staff. The honorees were Moriah Ferullo, responsible for the Physical Examination Program; and Amy Manowitz, responsible for the Early Lung Cancer Detection Program,.

WHPP has programs at eight sites across the country, five USW sites, two ATLC sites and Fernald. The sites include: the three gaseous diffusion sites at Portsmouth, OH; Paducah, KY; and Oak Ridge K-25, TN. Also included are: the Mound Closure Site, Miamisburg, OH; Idaho National Laboratory (INL), Idaho Falls, ID; Fernald Closure Site, Harrison, OH; and X-10; Y-12, Oak Ridge, TN.

In addition to program results, the three-day meeting covered future outlook and individual site outreach plans, and invited speakers who addressed topics relevant to the WHPP program. DOE Chief Health, Safety and Security Officer, Glenn Podonsky assured the participants he would seek continued and increased funding of the Former Worker Program (FWP).

USW Legislative Director Holly Hart spoke to the group for the first time and gave an overview of Legislative Department activities and the complexity of serving the needs of the many industries represented by USW.

The Department of Labor gave both an overview of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA), claims for each of the sites, and their Ombudsman gave a report on the problems with the Act reported to his office during the past year.

Although WHPP is entirely separate from EEOICPA,

the results letters that are sent to WHPP program participants direct those with abnormal results that may be associated with an occupational exposure to contact one of WHPP’s coordinators for information about follow up for possibly filing a claim. Most of the coordinators spend time helping potential claimants with their paperwork.

Mark Griffon, a member of the President’s Committee on Radiation and Worker Health, talked about the current work of the Radiation Advisory Board, as it is commonly called.

Jordan Barab, Senior Labor Policy Advisor, Education and Labor Committee, House of Representatives, now Acting Chief of OSHA and Deputy Chief, talked to the group about the Committee’s past year’s activities on EEOICPA and what he expected in 2009 which has a heavy calendar of health and safety activities.

Richard Miller, a long-time activist in the atomic sector and one of the architects of the EEOICPA, addressed ways to lay the groundwork for any program changes.

A highlight of the meeting was the presentation to retiring WHPP Program Director, Sylvia Kieding who received a framed Earl Dotter photograph in appreciation for her tireless and expert leadership of the program since its inception. Sylvia will be switching roles in her retirement and will continue to assist USW in her new role of news and communications specialist for the Labor Institute.

Tom McQuiston, the new WHPP Program Director, and Jeanne Cisco, Portsmouth coordinator, who will assist Tom in his new position, facilitated a number of discussions with the coordinators about program outreach, EEOICPA, and communications. The real activity and heart of the meeting occurs with the exchange among WHPP coordinators.

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