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For Immediate Release

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Construction Industry Needs Dedicated OSHA Agency, Says Building Trades President

BCTD President Mark Ayers Tells Congress That Construction Industry Facing a Safety and Health Crisis

WASHINGTON, DC – In a June 24th appearance before the House Education and Labor Committee, Building and Construction Trades Department President Mark H. Ayers cited the recent spate of construction fatalities around the nation as testament to the need for the establishment of a dedicated OSHA agency specifically for construction.

“Few people understand,” said Ayers, “that, on average, four workers are killed every day on U.S. construction sites.”

Appearing at a hearing to discern if the federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration was adequately enforcing construction safety measures, Ayers addressed the recent wave of deaths in Las Vegas, NV – which total 17 in the past 12 months – along with the increased incidents of construction crane accidents nationwide.

In relation to the Las Vegas fatalities, Ayers remarked, “Mr. Chairman, I submit that if – God forbid – 17 police officers had perished in the line of duty, we would see the National Guard patrolling the streets of Las Vegas. And if two miners became trapped in an underground mine accident, television networks would interrupt their regular programming for live coverage of the rescue effort. Disturbingly, it seems as if America’s construction workers are viewed as disposable commodities. It is an absolute outrage, and it is something I take very personally.”

In addition to the recommendation for a new office of construction safety within OSHA, the Building and Construction Trades Department made four other recommendations for improving safety on U.S. construction sites:

1. An OSHA temporary emergency standard requiring that all workers in the industry are trained and certified in accordance with the basic 10-hour OSHA safety and health training program.
2. Immediate promulgation of an OSHA crane safety standard.
3. Stepped up OSHA jobsite enforcement activities.
4. Increased funding for construction safety and health research under NIOSH.

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The Building & Construction Trades Department (www.bctd.org) is an alliance of 13 national and international unions that collectively represent 2.5 million skilled craft workers in the United States and Canada.