



Construction Workers Explain Why Workplace Injuries Go Unreported

Construction Workers' Reasons for Not Reporting Work-Related Injuries: An Exploratory Study

Moore JT, Cigularov KP, Sampson JM, Rosecrance JC, Chen PY. *International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics*, 2013.

Overview

Previous research has established that construction workers often fail to report injuries incurred on the job, despite the possible benefits of treatment available through workers' compensation. Why is this? The authors placed this question before two focus groups of construction workers, and investigated further with a written survey mailed to 614 construction workers belonging to a labor union in the Northwest U.S. Of the 135 who responded (22% response rate), more than one-fourth indicated that they had failed to report a work-related injury. In both the focus groups and individual surveys, workers frequently reported that they did not report injuries because they perceived these injuries as "small" and "part of the job" or because they feared negative consequences from their employer or peers. The authors suggest strategies to overcome these reasons and reduce the under-reporting of injuries in the construction industry.

Key Findings

- Focus group participants identified multiple reasons why workers failed to report workplace injuries: workers accept that injury is part of the job; they wanted to remain eligible for safety incentive prizes; they did not wish employers or coworkers to see them as complainers or as weak; they feared they would not be hired again by their employer if they reported an injury; and they found the paperwork and process for filing a claim daunting.
- More than one-fourth of the respondents said that at some point in their construction career they suffered a work-related injury but did not report it.
- Workers who explained their failure to report a work-related injury were most likely to say that "my injury was small" and "pain is a natural part of my job."
- Several of the workers surveyed indicated that they feared employer retaliation or loss of work opportunities, or that they could not afford to take time off work to see a doctor.
- The authors recommend that firms adopt a "positive error management climate (EMC)" that will "promote reporting of injuries... through the development and cultivation of a climate of open communication with a focus on problem-solving and learning."

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See abstract:

<http://www.ciop.pl/29782.html#art8>

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