



How Legislation Has Affected Construction Worker Safety in New York City

Impacts of Policy Changes on Worker Safety Outcomes in New York City Construction Sites

Maria C. Figueroa. CPWR Small Study, 2020.

Overview

The construction boom in New York City during the latter part of the 2010s was accompanied by a dramatic surge in injuries and fatalities. Day laborers in the residential sector have been particularly vulnerable, as have immigrants and non-union workers. These groups have typically had limited access to safety training and labor education, resulting in less knowledge about implementation and enforcement of labor laws. To reduce injury and fatality rates among vulnerable workers and to respond to growing demands from unions for increased safety measures, the City of New York enacted Local Law 196 in October 2017. It requires increased safety training for the issuance and renewal of building permits and promotes access to safety training for the target population of immigrant day laborers, non-union workers, and other at-risk workers. This study assessed the impact of Local Law 196 on safety outcomes in NYC's construction industry.

For more information, contact:

Maria C. Figueroa: mcf22@cornell.edu

Read the report:

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Key Findings

- Injury rates were consistently lower than would have been expected before Local Law 196. This trend can be attributed only partially to the legislation, however, as before its passage day laborer organizations had increased trainings and prosecutors had been strengthening enforcement.
- Increased access to training for vulnerable and immigrant workers contributed to greater safety awareness, ability to prevent accidents, and sense of individual empowerment.
- The study found limits to training's impact without other injury prevention mechanisms, such as enforcement of site safety regulations and promotion of a safety culture among managers.
- Significant barriers kept the target population from fully accessing the training program, including limited outreach to workers and employers and delivery methods that do not recognize challenges facing workers, such as language, literacy, and fear of employer retaliation.
- Implementation of the law may be limiting success and even creating unanticipated consequences, such as employer practices prioritizing training certification cards over compliance with safety regulations and worker protections. Outcomes may be enhanced by increasing input on program design and implementation from day laborer organizations, which have been critical in increasing access to training for these workers.
- Increasing collaboration between the city's Department of Buildings (which administers the program) and organizations with experience with labor standards would enhance enforcement.



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