

Fatal Falls and Hispanic Construction Workers

Fatal falls among Hispanic construction workers

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Overview

The number of Hispanics in construction tripled over the past decade, peaking at around three million workers. These workers are typically young, lack English-speaking abilities, are not highly educated, and are employed in low-skill and high-risk occupations. This study addresses concerns about the growing number of Hispanics in the construction workforce and the risk of fatal falls in this group. CPWR researchers looked at trends in fatal falls among Hispanic construction workers from 1992 through 2006. Fall data were taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Census of Fatal Occupational injuries, and rates were calculated using employment numbers from the Current Population Survey.

Key Findings

- The proportion of fatal falls among Hispanic workers increased overtime from an annual average of 37% between 1992 and 2002 to 40% in 2006; the proportion was stable for white, non-Hispanic workers during this period.
- Nearly half of the Hispanic fall decedents were under 35 years of age, which is more than twice the proportion of their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.
- Nearly two-thirds of Hispanic fatalities in construction occurred within the first year of employment and in small establishments with fewer than 10 employees.
- About 35% of Hispanic fall fatalities were falls from roofs, compared to less than 29% of white, non-Hispanic fatal falls.
- Between 2003 and 2006, 80% of the Hispanic fall decedents were foreign-born; 70% of those foreign-born were from Mexico.
- Hispanics were 1.5 times more likely to die from a fall than white, non-Hispanics.
- Hispanic ethnicity alone may not make as much of a difference as foreign-born status does. Lack of basic knowledge in construction activities/tasks, lack of ability to understand English, and lack of safety and health training were possible risk factors among foreign-born workers since they were new to construction and the U.S.

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See abstract:

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