

## CPWR Refocused on Intervention

**W**elcome to the CPWR newsletter, with a new look and a new name. *On Center* is part of CPWR's increasing emphasis on practical information and preventions to improve safety and health for construction workers. CPWR, the Center to Protect Workers' Rights, is the research and development institute of the Building and Construction Trades Department (BCTD). As president of the BCTD and of CPWR, I'm proud of both.

CPWR and our unions have been working closely with contractors, insurers, researchers in government and universities, and others for more than a decade under funding from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which is part of the CDC. Our special relationship with NIOSH has enabled us to look

closely at the causes of the unconscionably high rate of work-related injuries and deaths among construction workers. Each workday, on average, four or five construction workers are killed on the job in the U.S. (Researchers believe the rates of serious work-related illnesses such as dermatitis, silicosis, asbestosis, and some cancers are also high, but those numbers are difficult to pin down, for several reasons.)

Since 1990, CPWR has supported dozens of research projects. One was finding ways to measure and predict worker exposures to toxic chemical hazards on construction sites. Another has analyzed government and other data to pinpoint the causes of deaths and injuries among the various construction trades. Some of our research has already produced useful products, such as:

- Model specifications to protect construction workers from lead exposures—now part of some government highway contracts

*(continued on page 2)*



## Major U.S. Legislation to Compensate Nuclear Workers

**A** hard-fought battle has produced federal legislation compensating former nuclear weapons site workers who may have been sickened by exposures to beryllium, radiation, or silica on the job. The bill, signed by President Clinton October 30, is the first federal health-related entitlement law since Black Lung legislation for coal miners in 1969.

"We fought hard for this legislation, and we won a big one for our members and their families," said Edward C. Sullivan, BCTD president. "Over the past 55 years, more than 200,000 building trades workers in America's nuclear program received inadequate information about possible toxic exposures on the job. The workers received little or no compensation for work-related illnesses they sustained.

"The BCTD will continue to fight to make sure all workers receive the benefits they are entitled to," he said.

The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program covers employees of U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) contractors and of some vendors who have chronic beryllium disease, specified cancers from exposure to radiation, or chronic silicosis from digging tunnels in Nevada and Alaska for nuclear testing. Several thousand workers or their survivors may be eligible to receive \$150,000 plus prospective medical payments. The workers will be eligible also to apply for lost wage payments through state workers' compensation programs. The law takes effect July 31, 2001.

Since 1996, CPWR, the research and development institute of the BCTD, has been coordinating medical exams for former Hanford, Savannah River, and Oak Ridge construction and maintenance workers. More than 10,000 workers have been notified about this free medical exam and about 2,100 workers had participated, as of November 2000. Many of the workers examined may be eligible for the new compensation.

Sullivan said screening programs are needed for all DOE sites and results from such programs should be used to make compensation decisions. Also, he said, the BCTD will seek to expand the programs to help locate deceased workers' survivors who may be eligible for benefits.

For more information on the Building Trades Medical Screening programs, call 1-800-866-9663 toll free.

### SAVE THE DATE!

#### Construction Safety and Health Conference and Expo

Hosted by the Construction Safety Council  
and The Center to Protect Workers' Rights

Chicago, Illinois, May 20-24, 2002

For details, call 202-962-8490

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**SPECIAL ELCOSH FOLD-  
OUT POSTER INSIDE!**

## Refocused on Intervention

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- Worker-produced suggestions (Bright Ideas) to reduce sprains and strains on Boston's Big Dig (produced by the Construction Occupational Health Project)
- A training program to protect against electrocutions related to contact with overhead power lines (produced by the Construction Safety Council)
- Hazard alert pocket cards for workers, in English and Spanish—with nearly 500,000 in print.

But now our research is focused even more on solutions. For instance, we're finding out how well a permit system for working "live" (like a "hot permit" for welding) will prevent electrocutions. With several building trades unions, we're trying out ways to protect against contact dermatitis, which can be so severe that workers must leave the trades. Our activities have grown to include medical screenings for former Department of Energy (DOE) workers and training programs supported by OSHA, DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency, and NIEHS, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. In the past year, in our continuing effort to make safety and health information easier to get, we have been developing an Internet-based resource known as eLCOSH—the subject of the poster you'll find when you unfold these newsletter pages!

We hope to bring you short takes on construction safety and health a few times each year, as the news justifies. In the meantime, contact us through our web site, [www.cpwr.com](http://www.cpwr.com), or by phone (202-962-8490) if you have questions or suggestions.

# Safety Training for Residential Construction Under Way

**C**PWR and 11 building trades unions will be training 5,000 workers in safety for residential construction in the next year. OSHA is funding the Residential Construction Safety Program.

CPWR and participating unions have been producing a curriculum and materials in English and Spanish. In November, CPWR trained about 60 trainers in Baltimore, Md., and Las Vegas—with at least four from each participating union. The trainers, in turn, are expected to use materials they received to train the workers by February 2001.

Each trained worker gets an OSHA 10-hour card and course booklets.

The participating unions are the Asbestos Workers, Bricklayers,

Carpenters, Electrical Workers, Laborers, Operating Engineers, Painters, Plasterers and Cement Masons, Plumbers and Pipefitters, Roofers, and Sheet Metal Workers.

The class topics are introduction to OSHA, residential hazards, scaffolds, falls, confined spaces, hazcom, PPE, stairways and ladders, tools, fire, electrical (1 and 2), motor vehicles, and excavations. The trainer and student materials, based on the Building and Construction Trades Department's Smart Mark training program, will likely be made available through union apprenticeship and training programs in 2001.

For more information, contact Christina Trahan at the Center to Protect Workers' Rights, 202-962-8490.

## Cool Training

**M**ark Peters, technical application manager, at left, and Paul Cromer, project engineer, both at Fluor Fernald, in Ohio, show Don Ellenberger, CPWR, a new method for hazardous waste workers to reduce heat stress. The pack, worn on the back, holds ice and cold water that is circulated through a vest (shown), which is worn under the protective suit. The outfit, which can keep a worker cool for up to 45 minutes, has a variable-speed pump and runs on 4 D-cell batteries. The system is made by Delta T Max Inc., of Pembroke, Canada, and is one of 10 being provided to CPWR as part of Fluor Fernald's technology transfer program. CPWR provides a variety of training in safety and health, covering

federal regulations and hazard recognition and abatement—some of it focused toward minority workers and some available in Spanish. The classes are provided in cooperation with building trades unions, with support from the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences, at sites across the U.S. In addition, CPWR provides training as coordinator of the OSHA Training Institute, Region III, with the Building and Construction Trades Department, the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, and West Virginia University. For some course listings and more information, check [www.cpwr.com](http://www.cpwr.com) or call 202-962-8490.



## Dr. Jack Finklea

**J**ohn F. Finklea, M.D., DrPH, a former director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health who worked to improve worker safety and health worldwide, died unexpectedly Dec. 22 at home in Myrtle Beach, S.C. For more than a decade, he served as a CDC medical officer on assignment, first to the Laborers' Health and Safety Fund NA and then to the Center to Protect Workers' Rights, where he provided invaluable assistance on scientific studies, publications, and training programs. His brilliance, his sage advice, and his sense of humor will be sorely missed.

## Alerting Workers to Hazards

**H**azard alerts, blue pocket cards for workers, are available in 19 topics in English and Spanish. Newer topics include Eye injuries (Lesiones en los ojos), Fall protection harnesses (Arneses de protección contra caídas), Ladder safety (Escaleras portátiles-seguridad), and Power saws (Sierras eléctricas). The cards on Lyme disease and silica have been updated.

New topics in preparation include Biological hazards in sewage and wastewater treatment plants and Lightning safety.

A half-million of the cards have been printed. The cards are free to BCTD affiliate unions or can be downloaded as two-page flyers from [www.cpwr.com](http://www.cpwr.com) or [www.elcosh.org](http://www.elcosh.org). Other materials especially for workers or for workers to give to their doctors, including a brochure on contact dermatitis (Save Your Skin), are available on both web sites.

## For CPWR, Workers Are the Experts

**T**o improve construction safety and health, the Center to Protect Workers' Rights (CPWR) works closely with researchers, owners, contractors, and others—especially, workers. Workers, who are in the trenches day to day, know the hazards and how to help fix them.

A 6-minute CPWR video shows how construction union members have developed ergonomic improvements or have pushed for other safety improvements, thus protecting workers and, in some cases, cutting project costs. The video, *Workers Are the Experts*, features a bridge project connecting Ontario and Michigan, a vacuum system to protect masonry workers against silica exposures, a crane mirror system, and other ergonomic improvements on Boston's Big Dig.

To order the video, check the Publications List at [www.cpwr.com](http://www.cpwr.com) or call CPWR at 202- 962-8490 for details.

## Electrocutions In Construction

**E**lectrocutions are the fourth leading cause of death among construction workers in the United States. An average of 140 construction workers are killed each year by contact with electricity. Many of the deaths are caused by working "live" or near live wires, and not using lockout- tagout procedures. Electricians and electrician apprentices have the most electrocutions per year, followed by construction laborers, carpenters, painters, and electrical power installers and repairers. For the full report on this research by Michael McCann, CPWR, and recommendations to prevent electrocutions, go to [www.cpwr.com](http://www.cpwr.com) or [www.elcosh.org](http://www.elcosh.org)



### Major Causes of Electrocutions, Construction, United States, 1992-97

Cause (Contact with:)	Electricians	Other Construction Workers
Overhead Power Lines	27%	54%
Electrical Wiring and Equipment	55%	19%
Appliances, Machinery, and Power Tools	5%	9%
Energized Metal/Other Objects	9%	7%
Other Causes	4%	11%
Total	100%	100%

*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data*



# CPWR, Affiliates Project Can Help 'Save Your Skin'

**T**his spring, CPWR and three construction unions will be on worksites looking at workers' contact dermatitis—and the best ways to prevent it. Contact with some construction materials—like wet Portland cement—can cause skin problems so severe that some workers must leave the trades. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH, estimates that work-related skin problems cost up to \$1 billion per year (in all industries).

The Bricklayers, Laborers, and Plasterers and Cement Masons will

help formally evaluate the use of a hand rinse on the job to neutralize the harmful effects of handling the cement.

At the same time, the project will look at the economics and social effects of work-related skin problems and controls—and try to identify other causes of skin problems, such as epoxies.

Some Operative Plasterer and Cement Mason trainers have already been shown how to teach workers about avoiding skin problems and are training workers in the field.

CPWR and the unions have produced a *Save Your Skin* brochure for workers and a *Physician's Alert* brochure to give to doctors. A *Soap Fact Sheet* shows which skin cleaners are safe to use, without making skin irritation worse. There is also an instructor's training manual and a hazard alert pocket card for workers.

The hazard alert, *Skin Problems*, can be downloaded in English or Spanish from [www.cpwr.com](http://www.cpwr.com) or [www.elcosh.org](http://www.elcosh.org). Or call Christina Trahan at CPWR, 202-962- 8490, for more information.



**These soaps are OK to use. Look for soaps that have no lanolin, limonene, perfume, or abrasives. Other soaps not shown may also be OK to use. If you have questions, contact CPWR.**

**Center**

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