

Occupational Health and Latino Migrant Workers

A longitudinal assessment of occupation, respiratory symptoms, and blood lead levels among Latino day laborers in a non-agricultural setting

Rabito FA, Perry S, Salinas O, Hembling J, Schmidt N, Parsons PJ, Kissinger P. American Journal of Industrial Medicine, May 2011.

Overview

Foreign-born Latino workers experience higher rates of fatal traumatic occupational injury than other workers. They are more likely to work in temporary day labor or other informal work arrangements. Information about other work-related health effects is limited. This study recruited workers previously enrolled at least six months in a larger study of male Latino migrant workers who had moved to the Greater New Orleans area following Hurricane Katrina for the sole purpose of seeking work. Workers completed questionnaires about work, use of gloves, face masks or eye protection, injury, lead exposure, and symptoms related to lead or to eye, nose, throat or respiratory irritation. Study team members conducted follow up monthly in the field and by phone, updating contact information, employment and injury information. Within this previously selected group, participation was very high and lasted for the full 12 months of the study.

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See abstract:

<http://bit.ly/1fnwM1X>

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Key Findings

- Study participants averaged 30.4 years of age and earned an average of \$450 a week; 69.9% were from Honduras, and 59.7% had less than seven years of formal education. All but one were undocumented.
- Workers averaged 41.5 hours of work per week throughout the study period, and most worked in a variety of construction jobs.
- The majority of construction workers reported respiratory, skin, and eye, nose, throat symptoms.
- Fewer than half reported having worn a mask in the previous month.
- Blood lead levels were higher in workers who performed construction tasks, regardless of whether they wore masks. The average blood lead level for all workers was higher than the average for the U.S. population, but all results were below OSHA's limits [which are very high and outdated].



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