

Factors contributing to vulnerability of inexperienced carpenters

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Fall Prevention Training with Residential Apprentice Carpenters

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- Collaboration with Carpenters' District Council of Greater St. Louis and Vicinity and the Homebuilders Association in St Louis area

Funded by the Center to Protect Workers' Rights
NIOSH cooperative agreement

Falls from height - responsible for significant morbidity and mortality

- Residential carpenters work from multiple elevated surfaces

... they fall from all of them.

Evaluate and improve fall prevention training for residential apprentices

- Longitudinal observational study
 - ◆ Before/after
 - ☞ Surveys measuring understanding fall protection principles
 - ☞ Work site audits measuring application of fall prevention

As part of a needs assessment

- Focus groups conducted
 - ◆ Factors that might influence effectiveness of training
 - ☞ Timing of training
 - ☞ Barriers to fall prevention
 - ☞ Recommendations for improvements
 - ◆ Particularly interested in input from inexperienced apprentices

Focus groups

- 5 groups with 36 apprentices, separated by level of training
- Worked from guide – broad questions and more detailed probes
 - ◆ Fall hazard identification
 - ◆ Training in school
 - ◆ Training on worksites
 - ◆ Worksite practices

- Interviews were taped, transcribed
- Organized/analyzed with qualitative software – N5/6 (QSR)
 - ◆ Initial coding structure based on broad domains from guide
 - ◆ Identified other insightful issues/themes

Mentoring varied tremendously

- Tutelage and demonstrations
- Some hands on training was incorrect
- Letting someone learn, literally, by the school of hard knocks

“I think the biggest way people learn fall prevention is – and I hate to say it – by seeing someone do it [fall].”

Difficulty applying what they had learned in school

- Cannot tell a journeyman that they won't do something even if it is unsafe.

“Pretty much everything they talked about in training (school) after six months, “this is how it should be done,” and you’re like, that ain’t the way we’re doing it out in the field.”

“A lot of contractors don’t let you use toe boards at all. They say it takes too much time.”



Job security

“when you’re a “cub” you don’t have job security because you’re a dime a dozen... they’ll fire you and go hire the next person. So start voicing your opinion about getting that little harness, they’ll be like”...

‘We can get another person to come right out here tomorrow, get the same price you get paid.’



**Some apprentices had never
seen a fall arrest harness on
their worksite**

*“Never seeing something (safety
equipment) makes me feel it is
not offered.”*

Speed of work

- Created stress
- Influenced decision making about safety

“Speed is a killer.”

“Deal with it” ... if you don't have appropriate equipment

Incentives for speed and safety

- Added pressures
 - ◆ to work rapidly
 - ◆ not to report injuries

“ You get yelled at by your foreman to work faster– if we got under (proscribed number) we’d get a bonus check at the end of the year. That was pressure.”

What is the incentive for?

*“ Well, at my job, you can get hurt
– so long as it’s not turned in,
it’s not an actual injury.”*

- Conditions that keep workers from using safety knowledge or reporting work-related injuries are **markers of vulnerability.**

Findings

- Remarkably consistent across groups
- Compelling evidence that apprentices do not (often) do what they are taught

Tendency is “*just do what you are told.*”

Failure to recognize the complexities behind occupational injuries has lead to:

- Short-cited information on risk
 - ◆ What does time in the trade represent?
- Attempts to “empower” workers through training instead of by addressing more difficult social issues that influence their injury experiences

Careful not to focus on
who is vulnerable, rather
than why...

Findings demonstrate...

- Even white, males in a union environment can be vulnerable workers ... depending on the context.