

# Executive Safety Update

The Monthly News Bulletin of the Construction Safety Center

Vol. 17, Issue 5 – November 2009



## Construction Safety Council becomes authorized AWPT training facility!

The Construction Safety Council (CSC), with its ability to reach thousands of contractors and countless number of workers in the Chicagoland area and beyond will help change the way employers view aerial work platform training (AWPT). “We are excited to be apart of the IPAF (International Powered Access Federation) and hope to excel to the high standards that it has set for itself in aerial lift training” says Paul A. Satti, Technical Director of the Construction Safety Council. “Having the ability to provide this high level of training will most certainly benefit not only our members but the whole construction community”. The CSC is recognized as a leading provider in construction safety training and hopes to have an influence on how employers address their aerial lift operator training. “All we’re trying to do is give employers the opportunity to make good decisions, AWPT is not only a good decision, but a potential economic necessity; let’s face it... aerial lift collapses, failures and resulting injury is not cheap!”

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### Executive Safety Update

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## OSHA issues proposed rule to adopt the Globally Harmonized Hazard Communication System

A proposed rule to align the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) with provisions of the United Nations Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) will be published in the September 30 [Federal Register](#).

The current HCS requires chemical manufacturers and importers to evaluate the hazards of the chemicals they produce or import and provide information to subsequent users. The current standard requires all employers to have a hazard communication program for workers exposed to hazardous chemicals. The program includes materials such as container labels, safety data sheets, and employee training.

A number of countries, including the United States, international organizations and stakeholders participated in developing the GHS to address inconsistencies in hazard classification and communications. The GHS was developed to provide a single, harmonized system to classify chemicals, labels and safety data sheets with the primary benefit of increasing the quality and consistency of information provided to workers, employers and chemical users. Under the GHS, labels would include signal words, pictograms, and hazard and precautionary statements. Additionally, information on safety data sheets would be presented in a designated order.

"The proposal to align the hazard communication standard with the GHS will improve the consistency and effectiveness of hazard communications and reduce chemical-related injuries, illnesses and fatalities," said acting Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Jordan Barab. "Following the GHS approach will increase workplace safety, facilitate international trade in chemicals, and generate cost savings from production efficiencies for firms that manufacture and use hazardous chemicals."



The Challenge Pilot Program has been designed by the Occupational Health & Safety Administration to meet the needs of employers wanting to improve their safety and health management systems and expedite their effort to attain VPP status by providing a "roadmap" to guide them through the process. The "roadmap" refers to the defined set of Challenge stages that Challenge Participants progress through. Employers will receive recognition from OSHA for incremental progress while formalizing procedures and methods currently used by many corporations that have multiple VPP sites.

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## **OSHA's new letter of interpretation requires that construction workers wear high-visibility warning garments.**

High-visibility warning garments are required safety attire for highway and road construction workers according to a new [letter of interpretation](#) recently released by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

"Highway construction workers should not suffer serious or fatal injuries simply because they could not be seen," said acting Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Jordan Barab. "Requiring the use of reflective vests is essential to help prevent workers from being injured or killed."

In 2004, OSHA issued a letter of interpretation about the use of high-visibility apparel in highway construction. The letter emphasized that section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act requires workers in highway work zones to wear high-visibility apparel.

However, the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission ruled that OSHA's letter indicated a more limited position: high-visibility garments are only required where the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) mandates their use.

Therefore, OSHA is issuing a new letter stating that all highway and road construction workers must wear high-visibility apparel regardless of whether the MUTCD requires them. OSHA considers road and construction traffic a well-recognized hazard to highway/road construction workers. Bureau of Labor Statistics reinforced the need for using safety apparel when data from 2003 to 2007 showed there were 425 road construction work zone fatalities.

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## US Department of Labor welcomes GAO's report on under-reporting of workplace injuries and illnesses. OSHA finds problems identified in report alarming

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) welcomes the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) report on the under-reporting of workplace injuries and illnesses and OSHA's audit process.

The report identifies a number of factors that may contribute to the inaccuracy of employer injury and illness records, as well as problems with the audits that OSHA conducts to ensure their accuracy.

"Accurate injury and illness records are vital to protect workers' health and safety," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "They not only enable OSHA to better target its resources and determine the effectiveness of its efforts, accurate numbers are also an important tool that workers and employers can use to identify hazards in their workplaces."

The report identifies worker intimidation as well as a number of disincentives that may discourage workers and employers from reporting work-related injuries and illnesses. The report also notes widespread reports from occupational health practitioners who were pressured not to record an injury or illness.

Acting Assistant Secretary for OSHA Jordan Barab announced that the agency will move swiftly to implement the recommendations made by the GAO. Additionally, in response to numerous studies of under-reporting and congressional interest, on Oct. 1, OSHA implemented a National Emphasis Program on Recordkeeping. OSHA will send inspectors into worksites across the country to review the occupational injury and illness records prepared by businesses.

"Many of the problems identified in the report are quite alarming, and OSHA will be taking strong enforcement action where we find underreporting," Solis said.

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