

Health and Safety



Cement Drivers Bring Home More Than a Paycheck

by Carl Feuer, TCLC & Robin Whittlesey, TCLC

Next time you see a Saunders, B.R. DeWitt or Cortland Ready-Mix cement truck, ask the driver how he's feeling. You may get an earful.

Working with Teamsters Local 65, the Labor Coalition recently completed a health and safety survey of the unionized drivers. The results are disturbing. Almost two-thirds of the drivers responding report one or more work-related health problems.

Cement dermatitis is one important problem, listed as such by over one-third of the workers. The main cause is lime, an ingredient of cement. Wet lime, whether from water on a job site or sweat from a worker's skin, causes severe drying and irritation of the handler's skin. Chromium, another ingredient, causes an allergic type of skin reaction.

There are other hazards associated with heavy or long term exposure to cement dust, and a number of workers expressed concern about this. The cement is mixed with flyash, which is known to be extremely toxic, and to contain silica. Breathing crystal-

lin commonly used additives may also be harmful. In addition, when cement dust is breathed in, the lime can react with the moist surfaces of the nose and throat to cause irritation.

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Noise is another issue, with one-third of the drivers reporting some type of hearing or ear problem. The drivers are subjected to high noise levels both when they are pouring and when they are loading the trucks.

From worker response to the survey, it appears that there is widespread disregard for the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard, as well. This law requires employers systematically to determine which materials in use are hazardous, and to provide education and training for employees on these materials. Most of the workers never received this training.

These are only a few of the health and safety problems. Other hazards include poor maintenance of the trucks, eye problems, and exposure to acid fumes. But the main hazard is a management that refuses to take health and safety seriously. Teamsters Local 65 is unlikely to accept this situation.

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line silica is known to cause silicosis, a lung disorder. Other

Food Service Served

by Robin Whittlesey, TCLC and Carl Feuer

Food service waitresses and waiters, food washers, food prep people, pantry workers—work hard, usually for low pay. Work can also be dangerous. Working conditions are often poor, leading to frequent injury and illness.

The large number of safety problems in food service work, and the need to do something about them, was brought home clear at a recent safety training organized by UAW Local 2300. Workers, from five different Cornell University, attended.

Let's look at some of the safety problems in other food service work.

Hand/Wrist Problems—repetitive hand and wrist movements, especially with the wrist held in awkward positions, can lead to tendonitis or nerves. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is one such problem hitting many cooks.



Labor Coalition health and safety