

Electronic Library of Construction Occupational Safety and Health, eLCOSH

One way to reduce the huge toll in construction work-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths is to have top-quality information about prevention readily available to site owners, supervisors, and workers. Thus, the Electronic Library of Construction Occupational Safety and Health, eLCOSH, a web-based clearinghouse, was initiated August 1, 2000. The site, the first of its kind, is easy to use and is augmented quarterly.

eLCOSH, at www.elcosh.org, has been developed by the Center to Protect Workers' Rights, with funding from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, part of the CDC), with technical support from Conceptual Arts, Gainesville, Florida. An advisory committee includes representatives from NIOSH, OSHA, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the National Academy of Sciences, and experts on training and workers' compensation.

As of August 2001, more than 450 documents were posted or linked from a wide range of sources. The eLCOSH home page offers information in English and Spanish classified into these main sections: Hazard, Trade, Job Site, Other, and Training; annotated links to 40 other sites on construction safety and health; a "What's New" listing of new postings/links; and a listing of national conferences on construction safety and health. For most documents, information is provided to facilitate follow-up with an author and/or organization.

Many of the items on eLCOSH are not available, not on the web, or are on the web with password protection. A few short documents are produced specifically for eLCOSH. And, to serve immigrant workers, documents are being obtained in other languages, including French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, and Russian.

We cannot document that access to the information has prevented an injury, illness, or death. But we do know that usage volume is increasing. The most current statistics provided by the CDC, the website host, show 111,000 visits in the first 11 months on line, through June 30, 2001. (The data exclude robotic search hits and initial stops on the home page.) Figures comparing the first two months of operation with May and June 2001 show the number of visits per month increased by 46% and the number of hits with each visit increased by about 16%, from 6.1 to 7.1.

	Average visits/month	Average hits/month
Aug. - Sept. 2000	7,500	46,000
May- June 2001	11,000	78,800

Based on the types of documents being visited, the site is likely already being used as a source for training courses. As the site's visibility improves and as personal computers are more widely used on construction sites, the web site should be used increasingly by workers and small contractors and by safety directors as a reference tool.

Thus far, unsolicited positive comments have been reported from contractor safety staff, health professionals, and others. e-mails have been received, among others, from a rigging instructor in Philadelphia and a public health nurse in Wisconsin. This was e-mailed from a university professor in Florida:

...one of my students this semester found the el-COSH site... his parents are managers for a construction firm that employs over 100 people; about half of which do not speak English -- so the Spanish translation section was especially useful... [The following is from] a letter from the president of the construction company...:

We have given each of our foremen a copy of the construction Spanish manual for use on their jobsites...besides the obvious safety factor, this information has provided a chance for the foreman to communicate more directly with each Spanish speaking person on his crew. Most of the foremen will ask the employee to say the term in Spanish so the foreman can learn how to say it and will then repeat the word to them in English. It has helped create a feeling of trust and comradery.

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