



Southern California Trade Contractors Association

Safety Newsletter

1st Quarter, 2016

Making Safety First On Your Job Site

The Support of Management

Everyone in a position of authority – from the company owner to the job site supervisor – needs to put safety first and the project second. While most construction projects take place under tight deadlines, accidents are more likely to occur when workers are hurrying through their jobs, cutting safety corners along the way. The human and financial costs associated with the inevitable accident are significantly more expensive than the investment of time to follow protocol. Management must ensure that all workers understand this and perform their jobs accordingly.

Employee Education

Regardless of past experience, all new construction employees should be provided with appropriate training – from safety procedures to the equipment they will be using – before they're turned loose on the jobsite. Supervisors should spend additional time supervising new employees as well. Seasoned workers can be valuable mentoring and teaching resources; use them wisely.

Tools and Equipment

Every tool and piece of equipment used on your jobsite should be in good condition, working properly and frequently checked for damages. Perform repairs immediately, and retire old equipment and tools when necessary. These rules apply to personal protective equipment (such as hardhats, harness, gloves, safety glasses and respirators) as well.

Work Zone Barriers

Whether your jobsite is in the middle of city or the outskirts of the suburbs, utilizes safety fencing or other barriers to keep unauthorized people out of the construction area. Additionally, use safety fencing to alert your construction workers particularly dangerous areas within the jobsite (such as excavations and openings or locations where they may encounter falling objects).

Improving Safety Green Construction

Energy efficiency, environment sustainability, occupant health – these concerns and more are driving the green building trend and surge in U.S. Green Building Council LEED-certified structures. The council predicts total revenue across the eco-friendly construction industry will grow to \$290 billion by 2017, and they intend to certify 1 million commercial buildings by 2020.

Unfortunately, the benefits that green construction provides building owners-including reduced operating expenses, higher asset value and a reputation for environmental stewardship-may come at a cost to construction employees. In fact, a study conducted by the Center for Construction Research and Training suggests that LEED-focused construction projects pose notably higher risks to workers.

Much of this risk comes exposing from exposing workers on green construction projects to tasks and materials that are unfamiliar to them. For example, workers on LEED construction sites may have to work at height while installing solar panels and skylights. They may have to work vegetated roofing materials and reflective roof membranes. The projects often require them to work with electrical current, near unstable soils and near heavy equipment for a greater period than they would on a traditional project.



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Upon examination of the information gathered during the study-from site inspections and project documentation to job-hazard analysis and injury reports-the researchers determined that 14 LEED credentials could contribute to higher risks to construction employees. These included:

- Sustainable construction waste management – 36 percent increased risk of lacerations, strains and sprains
- Installation of photo voltaic panels – 24 percent increased risk of falls to a lower level
- Installation of reflective roof membranes – 19 percent increased risk of eyestrain
- Installation of green waste water technologies – 14 percent increased risk of exposure to harmful substances

While the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has yet to do so, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), issued specific green-building construction safety guidelines in 2013. They noted that green buildings are often tightly sealed and heavily insulated, increasing worker exposure to dust and dangerous compounds during construction. They also noted that green renovations present their own unique hazards, particularly worker encounters with fiberglass and rock wool insulation fibers.

Green Building Contractors can do the following to improve safety for their workers:

- Take the time to conduct a comprehensive hazard analysis before you begin any green construction project.
- Ensure you've trained all workers on the hazards they may encounter due to new materials or installation processes.
- Whenever possible, use low VOC materials to reduce health-related risks in enclosed environments.
- Decrease reflectivity by choosing tan or light gray roofing membranes rather than white. Alternatively, require your workers to wear tinted eyewear during installation.
- Ask designers to place photovoltaic panels closer to the ground or in the center of the roof. Consider higher parapets and designed tie-off points to reduce fall risk further.
- Enlist a local third-party waste management company to sort and recycle construction materials offsite.

**This bulletin is intended only as a reminder and is offered solely as a guide to assist management in its responsibility of providing a safer working environment. This bulletin is not intended to cover all possible hazardous conditions or unsafe acts that may exist. Other unsafe acts or hazardous conditions should also be noted and corrective action taken.*



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Construction Firms Add 19,000 Workers in February as Numbers of Employed Workers Hits Lowest Recorded February Total

Construction firms added 19,000 workers in February, as the number of unemployed construction workers was at the lowest February total since the series started in 2000, according to an analysis of new government data by the Associated General Contractors of America. Association officials said, however, that sluggish gains in nonresidential construction employment may reflect that fact contractors are having difficulty finding workers to keep up with growing demand.

“The overall picture for construction employment is very positive with robust job growth and very little unemployment,” said Ken Simonson, the association’s chief economist. “Yet it appears that many nonresidential construction firms have run out of people to hire to keep pace with demand for new projects.”

Construction employment totaled 6,631,000 in February, the most since December 2008, and is up by 253,000 jobs compared to a year ago, a 4.0 percent increase. Residential construction increased by 15,900 in February and by 155,000, or 6.4 percent, compared to a year ago. Nonresidential construction employment increased by 3,500 jobs for the month and is up by 98,000 jobs compared to February 2015, a 2.5 percent increase.

Among nonresidential construction employment categories, the nonresidential building segment expanded by 4,300 in February. And heavy and civil engineering construction firms added 700 jobs last month. But those gains were offset by a decline of 1,500 jobs in the nonresidential specialty trade contractors segment. The relatively small increase in nonresidential construction employment occurred despite the fact the Census Bureau reported on March 1 that spending on nonresidential construction projects increased by 12 percent between January 2015 and 2016.

Resource: Turmail, Brian. The Associated General Contractors of America (March, 2016). <https://www.agc.org/news/2015/11/02/construction-spending-continues-strong-year-over-year-gains-september-dip-monthly>

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