

Training to Prevent Falls in Construction Aims to Score at Local MA Soccer Tournament

The Challenge

Falls in the construction industry continue to be a leading cause of work-related deaths across the nation. Just in Massachusetts over the last five years, 86 construction workers were fatally injured at work –more than in any other industry– and 37 of these deaths were the result of falls.

The Response

A national campaign to prevent falls in construction, spearheaded by OSHA, NIOSH and the Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR), is one of many endeavors created to shed light on the problem and find ways to educate at-risk workers. Outreach events are organized across the country to support these efforts. The Massachusetts Occupational Health Surveillance Program (OHSP) organized short trainings, or “Toolbox Talks” on preventing falls in residential construction to be held during a local Hispanic soccer league tournament. OHSP invited OSHA and the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH) to the event which included Spanish-speaking trainers.



Some of the soccer players during the tournament.

The local soccer tournament was chosen to reach 18-36 year old Hispanic/Latino males, mostly Spanish-speaking, who may have been self-employed, independent contractors, day laborers, and other workers who might not have access to safety training. The topics covered included: identifying and addressing fall hazards at worksites, educating workers on their safety and health rights in the workplace, and about the employers’ responsibility to provide a safe workplace, personal protective equipment, and training.

The Impact

OHSP learned valuable takeaways from reaching out to this group of workers at the soccer event:

- As we were setting up, we learned that many of the attendees’ bosses and business owners, who were also Hispanic, attended the event as fellow soccer players! This was a potential barrier for employees to come up to the table without fear of repercussions or that they could get their employer in trouble.
- Various attendees shared stories of times they were hurt on the job and the long term effects that they live with. These stories usually ended with the clarification that the injury did not happen with their current employer.
- Several of the bosses and business owners at the tournament asked us if they could take materials so they could discuss fall prevention with their teams.

- Attendees encouraged OHSP throughout the event, through a trusted community representative, to continue attending the tournaments to help build trust with the players which then would result in having an easier time getting our message out.

Based on these findings and the interest the attendees demonstrated, OHSP plans to hold several similar types of events in the future, with the confirmed support of both OSHA and MassCOSH. These trainings will be planned with a joint approach that would address the fact that employees and business owners play soccer together at these events. Spanish-speaking trainers were a great resource to have and will continue to be used.

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