

II HEMISPHERIC WORKSHOP ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

***“The challenges of Occupational Health and Safety in relation
to the IV Summit of the Americas Mandates and Sub-regional
Experiences”***

**“A Successful Experience on OHS
from the Labor Union Perspective”**

***PERMANENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE TRADE UNION
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (COSATE)***

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Labor unions as a prevention means

- "We must recognize that the frequent tragic stories of workers' health and illnesses, have been fundamental in underpinning important improvements in the legislations... Since the Industrial Revolution and still today, the organized labor sector has been the main factor for the majority of the improvements achieved in occupational health and safety matters"

Herbert K. Abrams, 2001. "Corta Historia de la Salud Laboral. Diario de Políticas de Salud Públicas, Vol. 22 N° 1

The Experience on OHS of the Cement, Plaster and other Union Industries

LABOR RELATION



Medium and small-sized enterprises that produce plaster and lime

AFFILIATION: Industry's most representative trade union in the Country.

Cement Plants: 4800 Workers.

Concrete Mixers: 5000 Workers.

Lime plants: 2300 Workers.

Plasters: 900 Workers.

The vast majority of cement and concrete enterprises implement a Occupational Health and Safety Management System.

Occupational Health and Safety management

- Currently, product quality is sought in order to have greater competitiveness in the markets.
- Mainly in developed countries, and in multinational and big enterprises in developing countries.
- This implies improving the production processes and the incorporation of new technologies.
- This results in the appearance of new risks at work, as well as of new forms to manage them.
- The new legislation that rules the markets allows for some demands from buying countries to exporting countries, such as: the respect for labor rights and the improvement of labor conditions.

Occupational Health and Safety Management and employers' participation

- As a consequence, voluntary good practices initiatives are being established by big firms; most of them in the framework of the so called Corporate Social Responsibility
- There is a change of attitude towards the construction of a "culture" of health and safety in the workplace through adequate prevention management, similar to the existence of management systems on product quality (ISO 9000) and environmental management (ISO 14000)
- Propelling the establishment of Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

OHS-MS Achievements and challenges from the trade union's perspective

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Health and safety higher standards
- Priority at prevention activities
- Constant training
- Bilateral dialogue
- Participation instances
- Inclusion in OHS competencies
- Compensations for improvement proposals
- Rehabilitation programs

CHALLENGES

- Subcontracts, the increase of precarious work and workplace injuries
- New working systems and materials
- To increase their capacity to generate alternatives
- Code of Ethics
- The incorporation of our union colleagues from the medium and small-sized enterprises sector into this cultural change in the cement selection.

Occupational Health and Safety Management and workers' participation

- This contributes to the reduction of risks of workplace injuries and illnesses; consequently there is also a reduction on direct and indirect costs, favoring workers as well as productivity.
- Nonetheless, workers' participation in these spheres throughout our region is not yet very significant.
- It can already be seen especially in big export-oriented firms
- And most of the workers in our region are working on small and medium enterprises, or in the informal economy sector

Successful Experience in the promotion of OHS within the Unions

- Based on a national diagnostic on health and safety systems developed by the ILO in Mexico in 2002.
- The ILO proposed to COPARMEX and CTM the development of a training program for instructors on OHS
- Seeking the institutional strengthening of social actors on OHS
- Proposal accepted and supported by CTM

Characteristics on the ILO-CTM collaboration in the Project for Capacity Strengthening on OHS

- A joint ILO – CTM effort
- It would cover all of Mexico
- With union leaders of all sectors
- Inviting fraternal unions and
- Business representatives
- Aiming at strengthening the dialogue of the union on OHS, based on its multiplier effect
- With the main objective of preventing injuries and illnesses at the workplace

First stage

- Three regional seminars on OHS were convoked throughout 2003 within the first stage of the project
- Dividing participants by geographic regions: North, Center and South of Mexico
- 67 participants attended these seminars
- Representing different states and economic sectors of our country
- Some of which were working on OHS management systems in their firms
- Most of them being members of CTM organizations
- As well as representatives from other unions, workers organizations and governmental agencies

Second Stage

- A selection was done in 2004, and 24 participants were convoked, who were trained as instructors on OHS in two seminars on training and another one on evaluation and follow-up.
- A broad training on OHS was provided to the participants, who were also provided with methodological tools and educational techniques and materials on OHS.



Main accomplishments



- The design of a manual, developed by specialists, instructors and with inputs from the participants.
- The commitment of replicating within their respective organizations the knowledge acquired during their training.



Third Stage

- It started in 2005, with the implementation of various courses on OHS
- Organizing 14 events where instructors develop their practicum
- Attended mainly by members of the Commissions on Health and Safety in the firms located on the regions where the courses are developed.
- Comprised by groups where, in some of them, workers representatives are accompanied by employers and some governmental officers.

Positive Outcomes

- Training of 24 union members as instructors on OHS, 17 men and 7 women
- Training of 691 leaders and delegates on OHS at a basic level
- Who represent a universe of more than 100,000 workers in their working centers
- From 564 businesses of various big, medium and small industries
- The drafting of a manual on OHS, based upon the participants' contributions and needs

Promotion of good practices in OHS

- As immediate outcome of the activities developed, the following was accomplished:
- The creation of a Bipartite Committee on ergonomic issues between a Union from the *Maquila* sector which has more than 30,000 members and a group of employers. They meet on a regular basis to analyze this specific problem in the city of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico



- Contribution was also provided to the solution of an ergonomic problem in one of the most important sections of the Union from the metallurgical industry, in Celaya, Guanajuato through joint proposals.

Problems

In the production line, by arms, wrists and finger pains

Cause

Inadequate tools, guns, heavy wheels, excessive *torque*, wrong design of the working space

Actions to be taken

The tools provider, the chief of design of the factory space and the Union were called by the Commission on Health and Safety. The decision made was to re-design the working space, change the tools for lighter ones and improve the use of space and time.

Results

There was a reduction on the number of visits to the medical service, as 15 worker were affected in each shift

Conclusions on OHS from the Union's perspective

- For the Union, efforts towards OHS issues and the progress on decent work in our continent are, at present time, of the outmost priority.
- The contribution of unions on the efforts on OHS are fundamental and irreplaceable
- Training and education within the union on OHS are indispensable in order to improve communication and strengthen social dialogue
- At present time, collaboration and cooperation with national and international organizations and institutions on issues related to OHS play a key strategic role.

Conclusions on OHS Management from the Union's perspective

- Even though management systems on OHS are implemented in most cases by big export-oriented firms throughout our region, it is important to highlight the successful experiences and adjust them to the reality of most of our working spaces.
- It is indispensable to guarantee the participation of workers and their organizations, in order to ensure the success of the Management Systems on OHS
- Addressing issues of OHS and caring for the environment guarantee the achievement of socially sustainable, competitive and productive firms.

Thank you

Vicente Juárez Rivera