



DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

Safety & Health

by Safety & Health
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Tools of the Trade: Health and Safety Information OnLine

There is a wealth of information on roofing and other construction

safety and health issues online. But, it's important to know where to look. The safety and health instructor materials we are developing for use in apprentice classes and continuing education programs include links to important online resources like OSHA and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

This article, developed by the Center to Protect Workers Rights, offers another important online resource for members, local unions, apprentice instructors and contractors. It's called eLCOSH – the electronic Library of Construction Safety and Health. The site is devoted to construction safety and health issues and provides links to other resources important to building and construction tradesmen and women.

Despite research, training and equipment modification, construction remains one of the most dangerous jobs on the planet.

Almost one-third of work-related deaths in construction in 2005 were caused by falls, which is of particular concern to roofers. In addition to falls, being struck by an object and exposure to harmful substances are among the leading causes of death and injury to construction workers.

To give workers and supervisors another tool to keep themselves and their crews safe from these and other hazards, The Center to Protect Workers' Rights created the electronic Library of Construction Occupational Health and Safety (eLCOSH), a free, Web-based clearinghouse of user-friendly health and safety information. The Web site (found at www.eLCOSH.org) is searchable by trade, so with one click, roofers can be directed to a list of hazards specific to their work. The site was developed in 2000 with funding from the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH).

The site provides tips, such as information on when you need fall protection, information on hazards such as asphalt fume exposure, and guides to avoiding hazards such as falls through skylights and roof openings.

Users can also search eLCOSH by type of hazard, such as exposure to chemicals like isocyanates, or perform a key word search.

The information available through eLCOSH is compiled from many sources, including standard safety-and-health channels like NIOSH, OSHA, and the National Academy



of Sciences. But many other great pieces of information are produced by state occupational safety and health departments, trade magazines, scientific journals, training courses, or even just-released research reports on hazardous chemicals, fumes, and worker injury stats. These documents are not otherwise available to roofers.

Consider one document, "Will My Safety Harness Save My Life?" from Occupational Health and Safety magazine that offers these questions at the opening: "Will the fundamental design of that equipment in fact save my life, or will it actually take it from me? Will I be home watching the ballgame with my family tonight, or will they be preparing for my funeral?" The author wrote the article as a reply of sorts to an article that had appeared previously, "Will My Safety Harness Kill Me?" That article is one of the most-read articles on eLCOSH.

In addition to articles and editorial pieces, the site also provides downloadable training materials in the form of videos, PowerPoint presentations, checklists, slides and overheads designed to help supervisors ensure crew members are using equipment like harnesses, respirators and ladders properly. These materials are regularly updated. All the most current information on the site can be accessed from the "What's New" tab on the eLCOSH homepage.

Also on the homepage, users will find a counter tracking the number of days remaining for workers and volunteers to register for 9-11 related workers' compensation. All workers who participated in rescue, recovery or clean-up efforts after the World Trade Center collapse are encouraged to register for workers' compensation before the August 14 deadline elapses, even if they are not sick at the moment.

This and much more health and safety information pertaining to roofers is available on the eLCOSH site. Many of the site's documents are also available in Spanish, and a Spanish-language site map and search engine are also provided. Additionally, users will find links to other useful sites, such as OSHA's English-to-Spanish and Spanish-to-English dictionaries, on eLCOSH.

Visit www.eLCOSH.org the next time you have questions about occupational health and safety. ■



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