

The Changing Workforce

Does age, culture or
gender affect construction
worksites safety?

MNOSHA Construction Seminar
Nov. 20, 2013

Construction accounted for the highest number of fatal work-injuries in the United States in 2012.

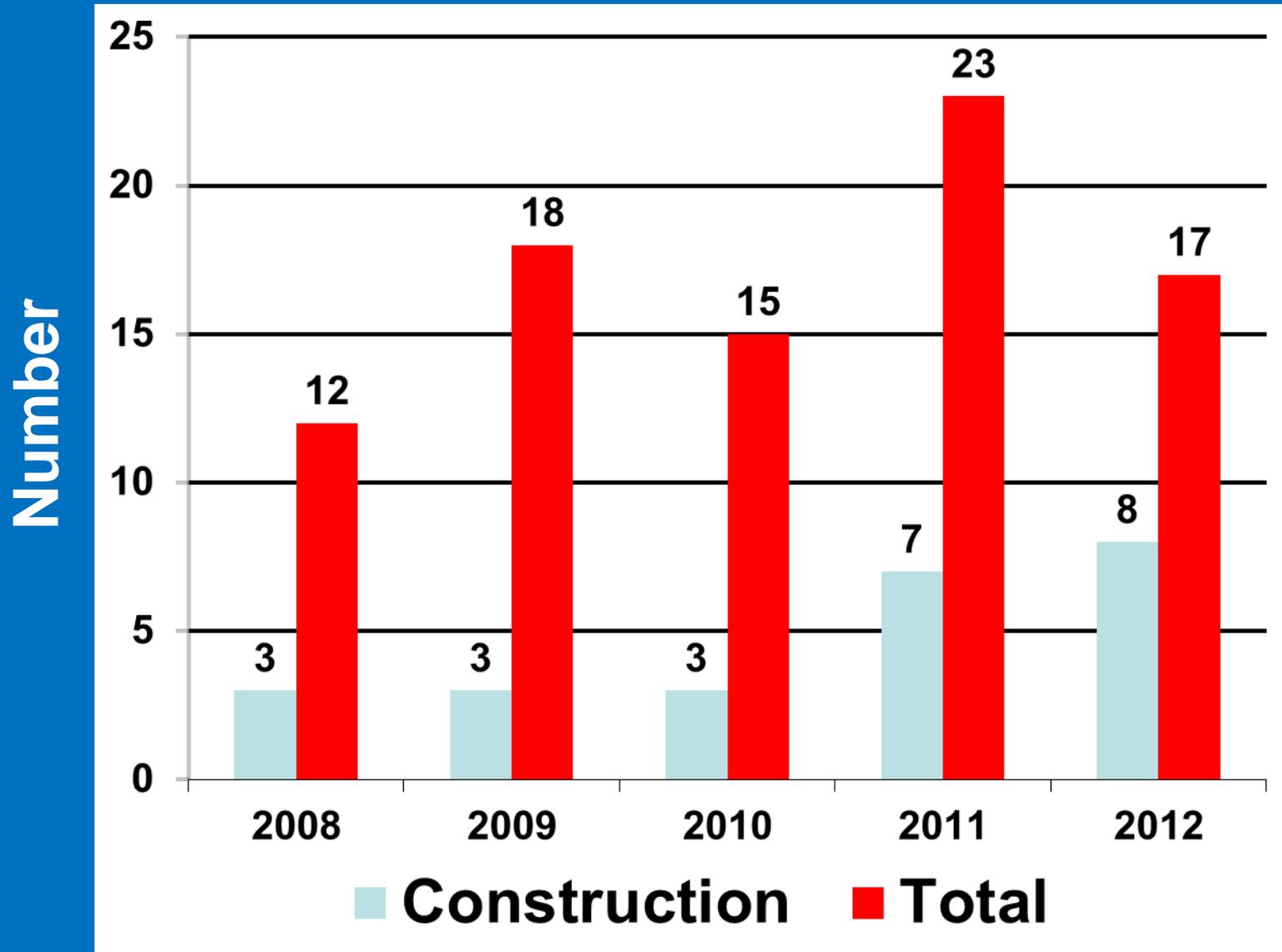


Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries
BLS Occupational Safety and Health
2013

2012 National Construction Injury Related Fatalities

- There were 838 fatalities, a 5 percent increase from 2011.
- Laborers accounted for the highest number of fatalities in construction trades, at 210.
- Roofers had 70 fatalities, an increase of 17 percent from 2011.

MNOSHA Construction Fatalities 2008 – 2012



Aging Workforce Concerns, 55 and Older

Aging workforce predictions

- By 2050, 19.6 million Americans will be 65 or older – 19 percent of the total American workforce.
- During this time, the expected rate of growth for the labor force members who are 65 or older is 75 percent.
- During this same period of time, the 25- to 54- year-old group is expected to grow by only 2 percent.

Aging Workforce Concerns, 55 and Older

- By 2016, one-third of the total U.S. workforce will be 50 years or older.
- By 2020, this same age group may number 115 million employees.



Aging Workforce Concerns, 55 and Older

- Although older workers experience similar events leading to injury, they typically sustain more severe injuries than their younger counterparts and require more days away from work to recover.
- Also, older workers die from workplace injuries at a higher rate than do younger workers.



Monthly Labor Review
BLS 2013

Aging Workforce Concerns, 55 and Older

Safety

- Falls
 - Vision
 - Hearing
- High fatality rates – 3 percent of the workforce and 7 percent of the fatalities
- Highest lost-time injury rates



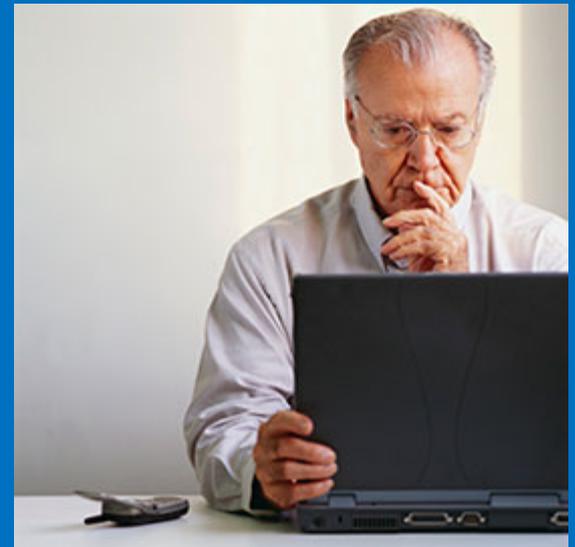
Aging Workforce Concerns, 55 and Older

Medical costs

- Highest insurance rates of any age group

Retraining costs

- Modern technology
- Age-appropriate training
- Individual work designs
- Well-informed management



Aging Workforce Concerns, 55 and Older

Benefits

- Willing to work different schedules
- Able mentors
- Experience
- Stronger work ethic
- More reliable
- More loyal
- Take work more seriously



The Young Employee – Age? Safety Concerns

Safety training

- **Communication – biggest problem?**
 - Talking skills, texting
 - Have never known a world without computers
 - Get most information from the Internet
 - Strong assertive views about safety and work
 - Short attention span, staying focused

The Young Employee – Age? Safety Concerns

- Many feel they do not need safety training, that it is just common sense.
- Most view safety training as boring and ineffective.
- Work ethic – is it different?



National Safety Council 2010

The Young Employee – Age? Safety Concerns

- **Do younger employees take chances on the job?**
- **They may find a way to get the job done faster, but does it create a hazard?**
- **Does the age difference create a communication barrier that could result in someone getting hurt on a worksite?**

The Young Employee – Age? Safety Concerns

Benefits

- Energy and stamina
- They like schedules
- Agile and physically stronger
- Great expectations for themselves
- Enjoy academic pressure



Cultural Safety Concerns

Language – Communicating

- Spanish
- Somali
- Hmong
- Others



Safety training must be done in a language understood by the employee.

- How do you know when an employee is trained and safe?

Cultural Safety Concerns

Supervision

- Trusting authority
- Women in supervisory positions

Religion in the workplace

- Religious holidays
- Praying during work hours



Cultural Safety Concerns

Different cultural dress (may be religious)

- Clothing getting caught in machinery
- Clothing causing heat exhaustion

Different social behavior

- Family priorities and obligations
- Gender issues
- Nonverbal behavior
 - Eye contact
 - Facial expressions
 - Hand gestures

Cultural Safety Concerns

Employers can

- Train staff members
- Make use of staff members' cultural skills
- Promote cultural celebrations
- Be flexible
- Not discriminate against workers because of the employer's own cultural background



Women in Construction

- Many people think of construction as a typically male occupation. But did you know that as of 2010 there were about 800,000 women working in the construction industry?
- That amounts to approximately 9 percent of the industry workforce.

Gender Safety Concerns

- Do men and women have the same physical capability while doing work on a construction site?
- If there is a difference, does this cause a safety concern?
- Women and men are hired and appointed to work side by side on many construction sites.
 - Can men accept this change without becoming envious and upset, and causing a safety problem?

Three Problem Areas for Women Who Work in Construction

These are identified by federal OSHA.

1. **Sanitation** – many construction sites use temporary restrooms, which are often not well-maintained. As a result, women may avoid using these facilities and drinking water on the job. This can lead to:
 - heat stress; and
 - bladder and kidney infections.

OSHA-recommended Solutions

- Provide separate bathrooms for male and female workers.
- Make sure hand sanitizer is available.
- Make sure sanitary facilities are cleaned regularly.
- If work is performed at night, bathroom facilities should be located in well-lit areas.



2. Poorly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) – women often have difficulty finding PPE that fits them properly due to their usually smaller size and different body proportions.



OSHA-recommended Solutions

- Purchase PPE in a wide range of sizes, including those suitable for women.
- Maintain a directory of PPE manufacturers and suppliers and the sizes they offer. The International Safety Equipment Association (ISAE) provides a list of companies and suppliers that offer female-specific PPE.
- Give female employees the chance to test PPE before use, to make sure it fits properly, protects against hazards and will not interfere with job functions.

3. Musculoskeletal hazards – tools are often designed to be used by average-sized men. Because women typically have less upper-body strength, the extra force required to operate certain tools or perform certain tasks, such as lifting, may put them at increased risk for ergonomic injuries.



Possible Solutions

- **Determine whether alternative methods for performing certain strength-intensive tasks are feasible and communicate these methods to all employees during training.**
- **Train all workers about proper lifting and bending methods.**
- **When possible, purchase equipment and tools designed with ergonomics in mind. If female (or male) workers complain that tools are difficult and/or painful to use, check if an ergonomically designed alternative is available.**

Are All Barriers Removed?



Interview: Woman Crane Operator

- **Q: Now that you are a crane operator, on the job are there any day-to-day challenges you face as a woman?**
- **A: No, my personality suits it. I say what's on my mind. Whenever I feel I'm being mistreated, I'll do something about it instead of letting it roll off my shoulders.**
- **Q: What would you tell other young women who are interested in this kind of career?**
- **A: I would tell them to do it. It definitely helped me grow as an individual. It helped my daughter have better opportunities in her life. Financially, we're off the food stamps.**

Interview, continued ...

- **Q: How do you like working in the trades as opposed to the office?**
- **A: I love being challenged. If I have a problem, I can figure it out. It's not boring. Working in an office, at a desk, was boring for me. I'd rather be physical at work.**
- **Q: Is there anything employers and colleagues can do to help women working in trades?**
- **A: Don't underestimate me because I'm a women. I get that sometimes and I prove them wrong.**



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