



## *February Contractor Safety Forum Covers PPE, “Near Miss” Reporting*

**BY SAIQA MALIK**

The value of human life matters more than any material gain, and Builders Association and its members are well aware of that, as exhibited by a packed house at the February 10 Contractor Safety Forum at the Chicagoland Construction Safety Council in Hillside.

The Forum focused on the most recent advances and techniques introduced in Personal Protective Equipment. Bill Funk of Advanced Supply Company presented the innovative technological tools that are now available in the market to make job sites more secure and safe.

“The new technology coming in and creating user-friendly products will make the construction sites safer,” said Funk, while demonstrating the use of new safety devices. While classroom demonstrations may have been the norm in the past, Funk mentioned that the idea now is to show tradespeople exactly how to use the equipment on the jobsite.

“This technique has to be far more effective than just using the classroom knowledge,” he said.

Mike Murphy of Association member Sperian Protection also contributed to the presentation, touting an investment made by Honeywell that modernizes construction site trailers.

“Technology and innovation will lead the way,” Murphy said. “Honeywell has invested \$50,000 in each of its trailers as a step towards modernization. They have installed flat screen T.Vs on which the workers can view the safety videos and there are a lot of other features that just wouldn’t have been there in the past. The idea is to use the technology we have access to and make the jobsite as safe as possible.”

A flashing stop sign standing in the corner of the room caught the attention of attendees immediately. Funk mentioned that the latest LED Technology used in that stop light could be seen for over a mile, yet another technology related safety measure

for employees working at night and in dark conditions. The Altair 4X Multigas Detector also uses new MSA XCELL Sensors. The sensor will tell the workers six weeks ahead of time if the battery needs to be replaced.

“This is helping field employees truly improve the safety program,” Funk said.

He also mentioned the importance of hand protection on a site, demonstrating and passing out new cut resistant gloves with a resistance level of 5 and water resistant gloves. A detailed presentation on Fall Limiters followed, conducted by both Murphy and Funk. A fall competency inspection is done on every piece, every year in order to retain laborers safety.

“We’ve found that fall limiters, as opposed to harnesses or other protection equipment, is growing in use,” Funk said. “Workers find that the fall limiters offer equal protection and allow them to move and work in a bigger area than the harnesses.”

The second half of the meeting, Safety Committee Chair Paul Flentge of Pepper Construction Company opened up the floor for discussion on other jobsite safety concerns.

The issue of reporting a “near miss” incident was brought into light by a number of safety professionals. It was mutually agreed upon that a number of incidents go unreported, primarily due to fear of being fired or penalized.

Jake Scott of the Occupational Safety & Health Administration mentioned that OSHA provides incentives to the workers for reporting those incidents, but that tough economic conditions might also be a contributing factor in reluctance shown by workers to report them. The group also appreciated the good job that OSHA is doing in Chicago, hence reducing the number of construction site accidents in the area.

There was also a discussion on the lead testing issue in regards to the renovation projects initiated by John Kubicek of The Levy Co.

Safety Forums provide an essential platform for the members to raise concerns regarding safety related issues and discover resolutions for them.

If your company hasn’t been sending its safety professional to these quarterly meetings, find out what you’ve been missing out on by contacting Stacey Kelly at 847-318-8585 or [skelly@bldrs.org](mailto:skelly@bldrs.org).