

# Safe Communication

## *Focus Is On Relaying Importance Of Safety And Health Through Positive Reinforcement*

The concept of the “letter home to mom” didn’t die the last time you did something in school your parents weren’t all that proud of.

It’s alive and well today as one of many motivators for jobsite safety discussed during the February Contractor Safety Forum at the Chicagoland Construction Safety Council in Hillside. A packed room of safety professionals discussed everything from cartoon characters to pink hard hats to Youtube videos as they related to the day’s main topic – communicating the importance of safety to every member of a project team.

“There is a gap there between the field personnel and the office personnel,” commented Greg Logan of Bulley & Andrews, LLC. “Too many times, the Project Manager fills out the safety plan but it never gets read and never gets used, which makes it worthless. We have to do what we can to make sure that plan gets directly to the tradesmen.”

One attendee mentioned hearing of letters getting sent to spouses of employees who repeatedly violated safety rules on jobsites. Most of the conversation, however, leaned toward positive reinforcement for employees who do “get” the importance of safety. Effective methods that the safety pros in attendance had witnessed or employed included:

- Letters home with gift cards for prolonged periods without incident or injury
- Posters promoting safety featuring workers and/or their families
- Safety lunches on sites where workers have gone without injury or accident for a certain length of time
- Signs on a jobsite indicating days since an injury or accident

“I really have seen those signs be very effective,” said Paul Howard of Frank H. Stowell & Sons. “You see something like that and it covers every subcontractor on a jobsite, it’s motivation. You never want your guys to be the ones screwing that up.”

Numbers nationwide indicate fewer

fatalities and injuries on construction sites in 2009, but Safety Committee Chair Paul Flentge of Pepper Construction Company was quick to point out that there may be multiple reasons for that particular piece of good news.

“Part of it could be that we’re getting through to people and workers are safer than they were a year ago or a few years ago,” he said. “Another part of it, though, is that those injury numbers are down because there are fewer employees.”

Another discussion revolved around the direct correlation between safer jobsites and the number of times safety pros meet with the tradesmen. Loren Whitney of Ragnar Benson Construction discussed the value of daily safety huddles.

“We’ll meet every day,” Whitney said. “It helps to go over different obstacles and incidents. There’s a great value in that the electrician now talks to the plumber who talks to the other guys on the site when normally they wouldn’t. I’ve seen

tremendous benefits on sites where the personnel meet weekly, not even daily.

“There are a lot of ways in which having that consistent reminder of what you’re trying to accomplish from a safety perspective can help.”

The recent renewal of the Builders Association’s Safety Partnership with OSHA was discussed with OSHA representatives. While the agency is planning a renewed focus on strict enforcement nationwide, Josh Moore of OSHA stated that, which partnerships like the one with the Builders Association aren’t in danger.

“Those partnerships are definitely still there,” Moore said. “There’s just less of a focus on finding them. We’re still working with the partnerships we have actively, we just aren’t actively pursuing more.”

Other topics discussed with OSHA representatives were the expected July release of a revised Crane Standard and web-based record keeping program, which is in the very early stages.



*Pepper Construction Company Safety Director Paul Flentge makes a point to a packed house at February’s Contractor Safety Forum.*