

WisCOSH Highlights of the Year for 2004

Workers' Memorial Day, April 28th

Fifty-four workers died on the job in Wisconsin in 2003, the majority from motor vehicle and machinery accidents. But for every worker who dies in an accident, ten others die every year from occupational illness, such as asbestosis and cancer.

On Workers' Memorial Day, we remembered the workers who died, and rededicated ourselves to the fight for workplace health and safety.

Our featured speakers were: Peg Lautenschlager, Wisconsin Attorney General, on "The Fight to Protect Wisconsin Workers"; and Neil DeClercq, Professor, UW Extension School for Workers, on "The Fight for OSHA".

Indoor Air Quality Workshop, MATC, May 1st

Jean Ainsworth is an activist on a mission. Since her husband died of mesothelioma on December 9th, 2002, she has traveled the country to raise awareness of the hazards of asbestos. Ainsworth's husband, Lee Hartnek, was a Racine police officer who worked as an arson investigator—a job that exposed him to asbestos.

On May 1, Ainsworth was the featured speaker at an Indoor Air Quality Workshop at MATC sponsored by AFT Local 212, AFSCME 587, and WisCOSH.

On that date, WisCOSH launched a campaign to educate workers and

the public about dangers of asbestos, and also to establish December 9th as Mesothelioma Awareness Day in Milwaukee.

Wisconsin Coalition for Legalization

Current immigration policies leave millions of immigrants in the shadows because they lack legal documentation.

As part of the "Know Your OSHA Rights" grant, WisCOSH is working with the Wisconsin Coalition for Legalization, which is made up of more than 40 labor and religious groups. Attending a July 17th

meeting hosted by WisCOSH were representatives of Esperanza Unida, the Faith Community for Worker Justice, HIRE, LCLAA, Community Union, Milwaukee County Labor Council, Racine Dominicans, Voces de la Frontera, and IAM Lodge 66.

WisCOSH Fall Conference, Call to Action on Asbestos, November 20th

Edwardo Williams, an organizer with the Wisconsin Laborers' District Council, spoke on the fight of asbestos abatement workers for health and safety rights on the job.

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Edwardo Williams (left), of the Wisconsin Laborers' District Council, issued a call to action on asbestos at WisCOSH Fall Conference in November. Andy White (right) of the Carpenters' Union spoke as a member of the panel. *(Photo by Sue Ruggles)*

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Too many contractors cut corners to save money. They hire nonunion and fly-by-night companies to remove asbestos—exposing workers, families, and the public to the deadly hazards of asbestos.

The Laborers' Union has led the fight in Wisconsin to organize asbestos workers, many of whom are Latino immigrants. Also speaking on the panel were Andy White, Carpenters' Union, and Jan Spangler, AFT Local 212, whose brother died of mesothelioma.

Seasons of Conscience, December 8th

The Faith Community for Worker Justice sponsors this event every year to highlight injustices in the community. This year, the target

was Towne Realty, which had hired a nonunion contractor to remove asbestos at Grand Avenue Mall.

On December 8th, more than 40 health and safety activists gathered outside the offices of Towne Realty and sang holiday carols, including Dust the Halls (with Old Asbestos).

As a result, the CEO met with the Laborers' Union and WisCOSH representatives, and agreed to hire only union asbestos contractors.

Mesothelioma Awareness Day, December 9th

In response to our call to action, the Office of Mayor Tom Barrett issued a proclamation making December 9th Mesothelioma Awareness Day.

It called on all contractors, property managers, health professionals, and citizens "to educate themselves about the continuing risks of asbestos



Seasons of Conscience holiday carolers gather outside Grand Avenue Mall to call attention to illegal asbestos removal by nonunion contractor. (Photo by Sue Ruggles)

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WisCOSH is available to answer questions about health and safety problems on the job.

Call us at 414-933-2338.

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