Silent Safety

INTERVIEW WITH TIMOTHY GALARNYK, SILENT SAFETY PRODUCTIONS INC.

Timothy Galarnyk is a construction forensic investigator, founder of Silent Safety Productions Inc. and creator of “Are You Ready to Work in Construction?” In this interview, Galarnyk discusses the Silent Safety methodology and how it is used to increase safety awareness among workers at multilanguage construction jobsites.

BP: Please provide a brief description of your professional background and of your position as CEO of Construction Risk Management Inc. (CRM) in St. Paul, MN.

TG: I am a construction forensic investigator with nearly 40 years’ experience in the construction industry. I founded Silent Safety Productions in 2012 with David Page, the producer of the first Silent Safety program. I have been actively employed “in the field” of construction since 1975. I found the great need and a workable solution to communicating safety that will change the habits and behavior of construction professionals without having to say one word.

I manage the day-to-day operations of CRM, performing construction forensic investigations of construction injuries, deaths, collapses, construction means and methods, traffic crashes in construction work zones and the production of educational presentations and programs for incident prevention. My work takes me all over the world and presents me with opportunities to see different cultures and challenges of global safety efforts—or lack of global safety efforts. As a result, the concept of Silent Safety was born.

BP: Multilanguage construction sites are commonplace in the U.S. What is most challenging about managing safety, health and environmental practices among workers at such sites?

TG: The concept of Silent Safety has never been used in the construction industry or any other industry in the past. The most challenging is communication in a normal, effective and understandable manner. Since at least 1970 when the Occupational Safety and Health Act was passed by the U.S. Congress, construction safety and workplace safety have managed to become increasingly difficult to the point that they are far too complex and literally too technical.

It is unreasonable to expect construction workers globally to read and understand the complexity of safety as we have transformed it. Therefore, we must rise to the level and challenges of creating a safety culture among employees that makes safety easy to understand and global in terms of requirements. Silent Safety will work in every country in the entire world without any need to modify or translate anything.

BP: Does a relationship exist between multilanguage worksites and a higher rate of occupational accidents and/or injuries?

TG: It is my conclusion that the lack of effective communications on multilingual projects, where one language dominates the two, three, four or more languages spoken in the workplace, leads to a higher rate of occupational injuries and deaths. In my own experiences as a construction forensic investigator, a common element among injured multicultural and multilingual workers is the lack of a working understanding of safety requirements.

BP: In your opinion, what is the first step employers and contractors should take to improve safety at multilanguage worksites?

TG: Orientation and identification of new workers. New workers to construction, to a new contractor employer and to a particular trade should be identified with a high-visibility lime-green hardhat with a red reflective stripe (an E2RW). All new workers as defined here must review the basic elements for construction safety—proper dress: long pants, shirt, steel-toed boots, hardhat, safety glasses, high-visibility vest and gloves. All sites globally should be exactly the same, and all construction types (residential, highway, bridge, railroad, high-rise, underground, excavating, steel erection, etc.) should have the same basic orientation upon new employment. Then, all construction “professionals” should wear a construction uniform.

BP: You organized Silent Safety Productions, Inc. to create and produce the DVD, “Are You Ready to Work in Construction? Why was the Silent Safety method developed, and how does it work?

TG: This is a patent-pending method of instruction. It is intended to provide a uniform, global methodology to communicate safety require-
ments relating to dress, behavior, actions, conduct and safety equipment needs in construction employment to help prevent injuries and death. Silent Safety uses graphics, acting and music to instruct employees of multilingual and multicultural backgrounds on critical safety issues without the need to be translated into one of 180 formal languages and hundreds of dialects worldwide.

Instruction number one is the acting and graphic showing of no drugs or alcohol allowed while working in construction. Instruction number two is the acting and graphic display that a construction professional has a uniform similar to that required to be worn by doctors, firefighters and police officers. Elevating the status of a construction worker to a construction professional will change attitudes, actions and conduct in this industry.

BP: How can Silent Safety be used to overcome language barriers on multilanguage worksites?

TG: This is actually an invention—a manner of instruction for construction means and methods and construction safety that uses no spoken or written language. It is universal and global in nature and can be used worldwide without translating one word, one phrase or one requirement. The introduction to “Are You Ready to Work in Construction?”© features the only words on the 10-minute video, and this phrase title is translated into the 10 most globally spoken languages. Other than the title, the entire video is graphics, action, gestures, facial expressions and universally recognizable symbols with a music background.

BP: Is Silent Safety easy to learn? How quickly can safety trainers begin to incorporate silent safety techniques into their own training for multilanguage worksites?

TG: Silent Safety is easy to learn—just watch the video. The message is abundantly clear. The concept is simple and understandable. Our slogan at Silent Safety Productions regarding this method of instruction relating to construction safety is “Completely Understandable, Immensely Affordable and Constructively Simple.”© Safety trainers can incorporate the manner of instruction immediately when obtaining this program.

BP: Where has Silent Safety training been used, and how have multilingual workers responded to it thus far?

TG: China expressed interest in more than one million copies. India needs this program, and the U.S. needs this program along with all nations in the world. We must make safety simple and understandable to effectively reduce deaths and injuries. The response from the industry has been positive, with 3M expressing interest in this program and with numerous international and national employers and governments revealing positive feedback.

BP: What other applications does the Silent Safety method have?

TG: Silent Safety has the application for all training measures not only in construction, but in industry as well. Operations can be shown silently of proper operation and care of small tools, how to build or manufacture something, how to form concrete, tie rebar or build a deck, etc. All means and methods of construction can be conveyed graphically, with action, gestures, facial expressions and symbols shown silently. We are willing to look at any custom programs and requests for silent construction means and methods and other safety issues not already in our development stage.

BP: What are your and Silent Safety Productions Inc.’s plans for the future? Will you create DVDs for industry sectors other than construction?

TG: Yes, we are willing to work with all industry sectors for orientation needs in the silent mode. The “Are You Ready to Work in Construction?”© video is the first Silent Safety orientation program in a series of at least six more programs. We must first orient the construction professional into the proper work gear, dress and “uniform.” The next programs already in development are:

• “Do You Want to Fall and Die in Construction?”©
• “Is This Excavation Safe for You in Construction?”©
• “Can You Get Injured with Small Tools in Construction?”©
• “How Do You Avoid An Electrocution in Construction?”©
• “Will You Get Crushed to Death in Construction?”©
• “Are You Ready to Grind, Cut, Paint and Breathe Safely in Construction?”©

We must begin with the basic construction professional uniform first and then move to the most common injuries and deaths “loss leaders” in the construction industry. These additional programs will come out about once every 3 months. We have set up a new website for additional information and for feedback.

Timothy Galarnyk is CEO of the international firm Construction Risk Management Inc. Galarnyk, a construction forensic investigator, has been involved in the construction industry for nearly 40 years. He founded Silent Safety Productions in 2012 with David Page. Galarnyk created the Silent Safety methodology of instruction and the first ever silent safety video “Are You Ready to Work in Construction?”©. Page produced the DVD. Galarnyk hosted a 2011 History Channel reality-based television program where he appeared as “Inspector America” and revealed the decline of America’s infrastructure. He is an international keynote featured speaker at construction and infrastructure conferences and presents on best practices, means and methods, risk management and safety as they relate to construction.