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# SPALW Newsletter

## (Safety Professionals & the Latino Workforce)

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### SPALW Executive Committee

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Ernie Garcia  
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## Welcome from New SPALW Chair

"Hola" to all of you, SPALW members and safety, health and environmental (SH&E) professionals at large! I am deeply honored and excited to be the new SPALW Chair. I have big shoes to fill, as outgoing Chair Hector Escarcega has done a fantastic job getting the group to this point. I would personally like to thank him for his leadership, dedication, tireless effort and friendship. Thanks, Hector!

Some exciting things are happening within SPALW. Most recently, our meeting at Safety 2008 in Las Vegas, NV this past June was our most successful and best attended in SPALW's five-year history. Our keynote speakers, John Howard, Former Director of NIOSH, and Edwin G. Foulke, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, captivated the audience with their discussion about the challenges SH&E professionals face as we address the issue of safety and the Latino workforce.

I have been involved in SPALW since its inception in Denver, CO in 2003 and have seen the group develop into what it is today. I am proud of what we have accomplished thus far, and I look forward to working with the SPALW Executive Committee members, Diana Cortez and Ernie Garcia as well as the Advisory Committee members. Through cooperation and collaboration, we will develop a concrete set of goals and objectives to achieve our vision, which is to make a positive impact in the prevention of injuries and fatalities in the Latino workforce.

My vision for SPALW is to increase our visibility, not just within ASSE, but also throughout the SH&E community, domestically and internationally. Together with our safety professional counterparts in Latin America and in other countries where Latino workers experience injuries and fatalities, we can make a difference and save lives. This will occur through partnership agreements with organizations like OSHA, NIOSH and Safe Work, a UN organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. Latino worker injury and fatality statistics are not just relegated to the U.S.—they are a global issue and one in which I see SPALW playing a major role.

I have high hopes for SPALW in the coming year, and I look forward to participation by those who would like to help us become a recognized contributor in reversing the negative injury and fatality trends affecting the Latino worker community.

Muchisimas Gracias!  
*Zeferino Banda Jr., CSP*  
SPALW Chair



## Recap of SPALW's Annual Meeting

By Andrea B. Fortenberry, Banda Group International

This year's SPALW meeting at Safety 2008 in Las Vegas, NV was the most successful to date. More than 75 people attended the gathering, including elected officials of ASSE and members of the media.

Distinguished speakers, Edwin G. Foulke, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, and John Howard, Former Director of NIOSH, addressed the group and emphasized the importance of safety in the Latino workforce.

In his address, Foulke called attention to the fact that one in four occupational fatalities is an Hispanic worker. "OSHA is a resource to work on helping to reduce fatalities and injuries of Hispanic workers," said Foulke. "We have done a great job, but we can never stop there: one fatality is one too many. You can never put a price on somebody's life."

Foulke said that many of OSHA's publications and quick reference cards are available in both English and Spanish. The quick cards are free resources that provide information with pictures on a variety of safety topics. Foulke recommended that the group let OSHA know if they have suggestions for additional quick cards.



*Edwin G. Foulke, Jr.  
Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA*

He also mentioned that OSHA is working on producing public service announcements (PSAs) in Spanish, with one already completed that features a professional soccer player. Additionally, OSHA is working on an alliance program that focuses on Hispanic safety. Currently, 16 groups are working in the program.

In closing, Foulke shared a personal story about being on a flight with three soldiers who had come home from Iraq. He related it to how the welcome home for them is the same for workers in America: we all want our loved ones to come home from work safely. "This is why what

SPALW is doing is important, because we are making a difference. We may never know the realm of our influence, because if we prevent something, we never know if it would have happened in the first place," Foulke said.

Howard expressed NIOSH's commitment to SPALW and a desire to explore partnerships regarding the Latino workforce and related issues. One major NIOSH achievement in this area is a partnership with Telemundo to run PSAs during "novelas" (soap operas), which reaches a large audience of Hispanic viewers. The current PSA is about ladder safety and directly relates to the "novela," in which one of the characters is injured after falling off a ladder.

Howard also discussed a 14-year study of Latino fatality data taken from 1992-2006, which showed a disproportionate amount of Latino fatalities, although the overall fatality rate had dropped.

"This must be highlighted at ASSE because of the high rates of Latino workers in the U.S.," Howard said. "Latinos often participate in many high-risk jobs. The average age of a Latino fatality is 35 and 42 for non-Latinos. During 2003-2006, the percentage of Latino fatalities that are foreign-born increased."



*John Howard  
Former Director of NIOSH*

In closing, Howard extended NIOSH's support of helping SPALW as a partner. Former SPALW Chair Hector Escarcega and current Chair Zeferino Banda presented both Foulke and Howard with certificates of appreciation for speaking to the group.

The SPALW meeting also included the passing of the gavel from former SPALW Chair Hector Escarcega to the new SPALW Executive Committee: Zeferino Banda, Chair, Diana Cortez, Vice Chair, and Ernie Garcia, Executive Secretary.

Escarcega had served as SPALW Chair since the group's inception in 2003 in Denver, CO. "The meeting (in Las Vegas) was a huge success," he said. "Thanks to some effective planning, we were able to invite the two

safety directors from the nation's prominent safety organizations, OSHA and NIOSH. It was very exciting to have them both speak at our event." Also exciting was the large attendance at this year's meeting. "We had a standing-room only crowd representing the private and public sectors from the U.S., Mexico, Central America and South America," he added.

"I think SPALW is important because a large Latino workforce in the U.S. lacks important and appropriate safety information, which would be beneficial in preventing accidents, injuries and fatalities," Escarcega said. "Our group serves as a formal clearinghouse where safety professionals can obtain and disseminate information. In addition to the resources available on our website, we also provide in-person networking opportunities, presentations, webinars and other resources."



(From L-R) Ernie Garcia, Hector Escarcega, Edwin G. Foulke, Jr. & Zeferino Banda

The meeting concluded with the group discussing SPALW goals and issues that members would like to see addressed in the future. Suggestions included communicating with employers, ensuring that workers are competent in English and using the SPALW website as a resource for achievements and lessons learned. After the meeting, attendees had an opportunity to network and socialize at a reception sponsored by Turner Construction Company and Giprex.



Former SPALW Chair Hector Escarcega passes the gavel to the new SPALW Executive Committee: Zeferino Banda, Chair; Diana Cortez, Vice Chair; & Ernie Garcia, Executive Secretary.

We would like to thank everyone who attended and our sponsors for making this meeting a success. Thank you also to former SPALW Chair, Hector Escarcega, for all of his leadership and the progress that SPALW has made to date.

## Work-Related Injury Deaths Among Hispanics

The following article, "Occupational Injury Deaths of Hispanic Workers—United States, 1992-2006," was published in the June 6, 2008 edition of the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*. This article is based on data from the *Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI)*, a multisource data system maintained by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and research-based investigations of occupational injury deaths supported by the NIOSH Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program. The article includes trends in Hispanic fatalities, their distribution by state, and recommended prevention strategies.

For the complete report, please visit:

[www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5722a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm5722a1\\_e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5722a1.htm?s_cid=mm5722a1_e)

Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Hispanics are among the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. workforce. In 2006, an estimated 19.6 million workers in the U.S. were Hispanic, 56% of whom were foreign born. To characterize work-related injury deaths among Hispanic workers in the U.S., CDC, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and certain state agencies analyzed data from 1992-2006. This report summarizes the results of that analysis, which indicated that, during 1992-2006, a total of 11,303 Hispanic workers died from work-related injuries.

The death rate for Hispanic workers decreased during this period; however, the rate was consistently higher than the rate for all U.S. workers, and the proportion of deaths among foreign-born Hispanic workers increased over time. During 2003-2006, 34% of Hispanic worker deaths occurred in the construction industry. Additional efforts are needed to reduce the risk for death among Hispanic workers because of projected increases in their employment, involvement in work with high risk for injury, susceptibility to miscommunication caused by language differences and other potential risks associated with culture and economic status.

The BLS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) collects data on fatal occupational injuries from multiple federal, state and local sources, including death

certificates, workers' compensation reports, medical examiner reports and police reports. Approximately 95% of cases are verified by at least two independent sources. To be included in CFOI, the decedent must have been employed at the time of the event, engaged in a legal work activity or present at a site as a job requirement. CFOI excludes deaths that occurred during a worker's normal commute to and from work and deaths related to occupational illnesses. A decedent is classified as Hispanic if documentation is available indicating that the decedent was of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or Central or South American descent or of other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. Deaths of undocumented workers are included.

In this report, certain data are presented only for the period 2003-2006 because, in 2003, industry coding changed to the 2002 North American Industry Classification System. Death rates were calculated for workers aged >16 years, using estimates of employed civilian workers from the BLS Current Population Survey (CPS). CPS is a monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households that uses a combination of in-person and telephone interviews with a single person reporting for all household members. Undocumented persons are included in CPS.

Work-related injury deaths among Hispanic workers during 1992-2006 totaled 11,303, approximately 13% of all U.S. work-related injury deaths during that period. Median age of Hispanic decedents was 35 years, compared with a median age of 42 years for all workers. Approximately 95% of Hispanic decedents were male. The annual work-related injury death rate for Hispanic workers exceeded the rate for all U.S. workers every year during 1992-2006, with the exception of 1995.

In 2006, the work-related injury death rate for Hispanic workers was 5.0 per 100,000 Hispanic workers, compared with rates of 4.0 for all workers, 4.0 for non-Hispanic white workers and 3.7 for non-Hispanic black workers. During 2003-2006, the work-related injury death rate for foreign-born Hispanic workers was 5.9, compared with a rate of 3.5 for U.S.-born Hispanic workers.

During 1992-1996, homicide was the most common fatal event among Hispanic workers. However, during 1997-2006, highway incidents were the most common fatal event, with the exception of 2000 and 2006, when falls to a lower level were most common. Work-related homicides among Hispanics decreased 37% from 1992 to 2006, while the number of falls to a lower level increased approximately 370% during the same period.

During 2003-2006, 67% of Hispanic decedents were foreign born, an increase from 52% in 1992. Approximately 70% of these decedents were born in Mexico. During 2003-2006, the most common industries

employing Hispanics who died from work-related injuries were construction (34%), administrative and waste services (11%), agriculture/forestry/fishing/hunting (10%) and transportation/warehousing (10%). Of those states with 30 or more work-related injury deaths among Hispanics during 2003-2006, the highest numbers of fatalities were in California (773 deaths), Texas (687), and Florida (417); however, the highest fatality rates were in South Carolina (22.8 per 100,000 Hispanic workers), Oklahoma (10.3), Georgia (9.6) and Tennessee (8.9).

#### **Editorial Note:**

Although work-related injury death rates declined generally and among Hispanics in the U.S. from 1992-2006, disparities between Hispanics and all workers persisted, with Hispanics consistently experiencing higher rates. In 2006, rates for Hispanics and all workers were above the Healthy People 2010 target for work-related injury deaths of 3.2 deaths per 100,000 workers (objective 20-1). Foreign-born Hispanic workers were at especially high risk, and a large proportion of deaths occurred in the construction industry. Much of the increased risk for Hispanic workers likely can be attributed to holding high-risk jobs. However, an analysis of Hispanic work-related injury deaths in the construction industry found that Hispanic workers also had elevated rates when compared with non-Hispanic workers in the same occupations (e.g., laborers or roofers).

In-depth investigations of approximately 200 deaths of Hispanic workers by NIOSH and state public health and labor agencies during 1992-2006 suggested characteristics that contributed to higher numbers of work-related injury deaths among Hispanic workers, including inadequate knowledge and control of recognized safety hazards and inadequate training and supervision of workers, often exacerbated by different languages and literacy levels of workers (CDC, unpublished data, 2008). Preventing work-related injury deaths among Hispanics will require 1) employers to take additional responsibility for providing a safe work environment, 2) safety and health agencies to provide employers of Hispanic workers with safety information and to ensure compliance with existing regulations and 3) researchers and health communication professionals to develop additional materials that are culturally appropriate and effective for workers who speak different languages and have varying levels of literacy. In addition, labor unions, community groups and workers can contribute to research and prevention measures.

The findings in this report are subject to at least five limitations. First, the number of deaths of Hispanic workers might be undercounted in the CFOI database, resulting in an underestimate of the death rate among Hispanics. Second, Hispanic ethnicity might have been misclassified in CFOI, which relies on secondary data sources, and also in CPS, which uses a single reporter

for all household members. Third, the number of Hispanic workers might be undercounted in the CPS, which relies on stable residences for sequential interviews and largely collects data via telephone. An undercount of the total population of Hispanic workers would result in overestimate of Hispanic work-related injury death rates. Fourth, Hispanic workers are a heterogeneous population, and analyses that aggregate deaths for all Hispanics might mask differences among subpopulations. Finally, the data do not address potential contributors to Hispanic worker risk associated with cultural and social norms or economic status. For example, Hispanic workers, especially those who are foreign-born, might be more willing to perform tasks with higher risk and more hesitant to decline such tasks for fear of losing their jobs.

CDC, OSHA and other agencies have provided additional Spanish-language occupational health and safety materials and training opportunities for employers, supervisors and workers. OSHA has worked with employers to publicize best practices for Hispanic worker education and training programs. In addition, federally supported research projects are exploring grassroots approaches to improving occupational health and safety among Hispanic and other immigrant workers. Other agencies can build upon these projects to develop culturally competent programs that engage Hispanic workers in identifying and addressing their occupational health and safety concerns.

## OSHA's Hispanic Outreach

*By Diana Cortez, OSHA*

OSHA has made immigrant workplace safety a priority within the agency and is committed to identifying ways to improve the safety and health of immigrant and other hard-to-reach workers. While overall workplace fatalities have dropped 20% in the last decade, workplace fatalities among Hispanic workers, especially those working in the construction industry, have risen. OSHA is taking a multipronged approach to improving safety and health for and providing outreach and assistance to the Hispanic community.

### Outreach Assistance

OSHA offers many Hispanic outreach compliance tools, programs and training resources to help employers and Spanish-speaking workers prevent and reduce injuries and illnesses in the workplace. Visit OSHA's website at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) to access OSHA's Spanish-language information and Hispanic compliance assistance outreach tools, programs and training resources, including Hispanic-related web pages, electronic assistance tools, cooperative programs, training and pages devoted to publications, fact sheets, videos and more.

OSHA appointed Hispanic/English-as-Second-Language (ESL) coordinators in each of the ten OSHA regions to assist a variety of groups, including employers, small businesses, trade associations, union locals, community and faith-based groups and Hispanic workers with outreach, education and training. The coordinators are available for Hispanic-related seminars, workshops and speaking events. They promote cooperative programs, such as the Alliance Program, as well as Spanish/other-than-English training materials, compliance assistance resources and tools available on OSHA's website. Below is contact information for ESL coordinators in your area.

### Regional Hispanic/ESL Coordinators

Region	City	Regional/Area Contact	Phone Number
I	Boston	<a href="#">Kenneth Mastrullo</a>	(617) 565-9893
II	Tarrytown	<a href="#">Diana Cortez</a>	(914) 524-7510
III	Wilmington	<a href="#">Gilbert Trujillo</a>	(302) 573-6518
IV	Atlanta	<a href="#">Tom Bosley</a>	(404) 562-2277
V	Calumet City	<a href="#">Gary Anderson</a>	(708) 891-3800
VI	Dallas	<a href="#">Christine Webb</a>	(972) 850-4174
VII	Kansas City	<a href="#">Dee Cantu</a>	(816) 426-5861
VIII	Denver	<a href="#">Chris Matthewson</a>	(720) 264-6598
IX	Phoenix	<a href="#">Robert Kelly</a>	(602) 514-7254
X	Seattle	<a href="#">Adam Gerson</a>	(206) 553-5932