

CROET/Oregon OSHA Symposium
Oregon's Workplace Health and Safety: Looking Forward to 2020
September 24, 2009

Panel Discussion: How Will Jobs Change 2009-2020?

Moderator: Steven Lloyd, Interim Director, CROET at OHSU

Panelist Introductions:

1 Dawn Jones (Lead Instructor/ Construction Manager, Oregon Tradeswomen)

- Interested in diversity in the workforce, particularly on work-site training.
- Focused on preventing discrimination based on color and/or gender.
- Training course for women: 8-hour course teaching interpersonal skills, how to be a good worker, and how to teach others.

2 Gary Baysinger (Gunderson)

- Manufacturer in northwest Portland since 1919.
- There are a lot of baby boomers that will retire shortly.
- His company's work is very labor intensive and physically demanding (e.g., heavy manufactory), which will be impacted by the aging population.
- There are issues with hiring enough people because it is hard to recruit young people and immigrants for the metal work industry. 40% speak English as a 2nd language. Gunderson is filling the gap by going out into the community and recruiting people.
- Challenged by workers who speak English as a 2nd language (e.g., immigrants from Cambodia, Russia, etc.), facing language barriers, as well as cultural differences in attitudes toward trainings and safety.

3 Bob Bussel (University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center)

- Works on occupational safety and health issues coupled with immigration. One solution is to have a strong Union force, which helps increase legitimacy of having a labor union.
- His focus is on teaching, research, and technical assistant to workers and union members.

4 Art Ayre (Oregon State Employment Economist and Financial Forecaster)

- Presented "Oregon's Workforce through 2020" lecture, therefore, no introduction.

5 John Shilts (Administrator, Workers Compensation Division, Dept. of Consumer and Business Services)

- Presented "Occupational Work Comp Trends" lecture, therefore, no introduction.

6 Tom Chamberlain (President, Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Board)

- Not a union, but a federation of hundreds of unions and non-represented workers in Oregon, representing 225,000 Oregon families including firefighters, bakers, city government workers, nurses, construction workers, teachers, etc.
- Very involved in Apollo Alliance, Blue Green Alliance (environmental movement).
- Focus is on green economy—creating new jobs, and emphasizing the importance of the labor movement.
- Working on Emerald City Project for jobs in the construction industry.
- If there are lay offs, they offer counseling or other employment, training and benefits.
- Feels that Unions are a positive solution.

7 John Howard (Director, NIOSH)

- Presented conference Keynote Lecture, “The Future of Occupational Safety and Health,” therefore, no introduction.

Panel Questions:

1. **Medical Tourism. Will older Americans with physical challenges and medical needs seek medical care abroad?**

- *Art Ayre*: Has heard of this going on, but doesn't have any numbers to measure rates. It is occurring right now and will probably increase in the future. May also see many of the expanding healthcare jobs go overseas, including jobs such as record keeping and transcription.

2. **(Question directed specifically to Dr. Howard). Dr. Howard mentioned that the country may become bankrupt by 2017, where does the debt end and bankruptcy being?**

- *John Howard*: The economic viability of our future is bleak. The Administration has put healthcare front and center. As we look down the road, if the current conditions persist, we will have problems.

3. **How do we cope with the bilingual workforce for Oregon, what mechanisms do we need to put in place? Can you talk a little bit more about the multi-cultural literacy programs to improve safety and give more examples on how to improve it?**

- *Bob Bussel*: A large portion of the workforce does speak a 2nd language. They have translated important documents and policies (e.g., benefits, insurances, trainings, etc.) into other languages (e.g., Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese). Usually people tend to surround themselves with people of the same language and even live in the same neighborhood, thus there is less of a need to learn English. It is a challenge. If you translate things, however, there is less incentive for people to speak English. In the last 10 years, the organization has learned to pay for ESL classes in order to shift the focus to learning English. The bilingual workforce is a challenge.

- *John Shilts*: The court system already uses certified legal interpreters, certified medical interpreters and Worker's Comp has created an advisory board to address these issues.

- *John Howard*: We need to realize that a mere translation of safety training may not be sufficient for understanding and utilization of safety tools. The issue is beyond just translating the language. There must be a cultural exchange from the individual imparting the information to the individual receiving the training. Cultural norms must be considered. Translation must extend beyond the language—you need to not only translate the language, but also the culture to ensure that the worker fully understands the concepts presented in the training. Also, the language capabilities are wide and varied. Pictorial representations are often very effective. Some workers may not feel pressure to assimilate because they continue to bounce between two countries and two cultures (very different from the immigrants that came to America through Ellis Island a century ago). This results in larger language and cultural differences between an immigrant employee and the employer. To really understand the communication is a challenge and that's the first step: learn to communicate beyond the language. Second step would be, learn to communicate in your own language because how we communicate in a multicultural environment is richer than we think.

4. How can federal agencies lobby to overcome a decision that prevents federal employees from utilizing fitness programs on the worksite unless the employee does it on his/her own time?

- *John Howard*: The attitude that was part of the 1980s is changing. Work-life programs are emerging and Federal employees need protected time for fitness. Private-sector employers are doing a better job of incorporating Work-Life programs in the job.

- *Bob Bussel*: The private sector has made strides in adjusting to the change in the work-life relationship, including flex and leave policies, balancing work and family, child care and elder care. This will be an enormous issue in the future.

- *John Howard*: This is a place where Unions can take a lead in promoting healthy lifestyles in the workplace.

5. (Questions directed to Dawn Jones). Can you give more details about how your program is helping women to get employed? What is the average age of your client base? How long has your program been running?

- *Dawn Jones*: The program has been around since 1989. The Trade and Apprenticeship program is a 7-week program, with various speakers and hands-on training on how to deal with discrimination and sexual harassment, safety training, certifications for power-tool use, and field trips. There are 23 women in the class at a time and the class occurs 5 times a year. Stimulus money will be helping the program and so that it is offered 8 times next year. They have a 67% placement rate (until this year). Despite the current economic climate,

they are still sending women out to work. Placement happens differently for different women, some may need to start at an entry-level position and others can start higher up. The website is www.tradeswomen.net.

6. What happens to high-risk health employees when they are laid off at the same time as symptoms emerge that may be job-related? Also, does OSHA cover volunteers?

- They will be eligible for worker's comp benefits and may be get more benefits if they are unemployed. An example would be if a nurse's aid lifts a patient and becomes injured. OSHA does not cover pure volunteers, but frequently volunteers may receive supplements such as stipends, which would qualify them as employees and workplace safety rules would be applied to them.

7. Do you think people are sacrificing safety issues in order to keep their job? Are employees doing more with less in order to avoid lay-offs?

- *Tom Chamberlain:* Yes, people will do whatever they have to in order to keep a job. A union contract helps. There are public and private lay offs right now, but it happens less with good management.
- *Gary Baysinger:* It depends on the organization. Some have aggressive safety programs. Doesn't see pressure to take safety shortcuts and it is not encouraged, but stories that it exists do circulate.
- *Bob Busse:* There is a phenomenon of presentee-ism, where people show up to work even when they are sick (for fear of losing their jobs). It will be interesting to see the affects of H1N1 on presentee-ism.