



Teamsters SFO Ground Safety Report

Apr-May-June 2009

By: Ralph Ortiz – Ground Safety Committee Chairman

Fed OSHA issues DART letters to employers – Fed OSHA sent 14,000 DART notifications (“Days Away from work, Restricted work activity or job Transfer”) to employers who’s illness and injury rates are “considerably higher than the national average.” OSHA sent notifications to these employers based on the 2007 nationwide employer injury/illness reporting data. Those employers who’s injury rate was 5.4 or more (for every 100 full-time employees) that resulted in days away from work, restricted work activity or job transfer, will be required to take proactive steps to reduce the rate and improve the safety and health conditions in their workplace. OSHA may also conduct surprise inspections on some of these businesses/employers. United Airlines received DART letters from Fed-OSHA for BOS, DEN, JFK, OMA, ORD, and TPA. SFO’s DART rate was below OSHA’s 5.4 target level.

EPA to issue new proposed guidelines for Hearing Protectors - The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) which oversees noise pollution and sets the standard for Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) for Hearing Protector Devices (HPD), is currently in the process of revising the NRR labeling system for Hearing Protection Devices (ear plug, ear muffs) to reflect “real world” noise reduction ratings. The current labeling system for HPD’s displays the NRR (in decibels) of the HPD when used as directed. Studies in the past have shown that that the NRR is greatly overestimated and OSHA has indicated that the rating should be reduced by 50% percent.

Under the new proposed rating system, HPD’s will have a two number NRR range (versus the current single number). The “higher” number would indicate the amount of protection a “highly trained” wearer would attain. The lower number would indicate the protection which 4 out of 5 trained wears would get. Does this mean that the current NRR rating for ear plugs that workers are using may not provide the kind of noise reduction they should be getting? Not necessarily. A number of factors are involved in determining proper fit and protection, such as ear anatomy, fitting method and condition of ear plug.

Safety and hearing experts have recommended companies/employers to use “individual fit testing method” to “determine whether workers are receiving optimal protection.” Using this method would provide the best way to determine if the HPD is protecting the worker from noise. To date the EPA has not published the new rule. We will continue to monitor

developments on this. For more information, go online to: www.nrrupdate.com or <http://www.epa.gov/air/noise.html#activities>.

New Indoor Heat Illness Bill proposed – Assemblyman Sandre Swason (D-Oakland) has introduced Assembly Bill AB 838 that would require the Cal-OSHA Standards Board to adopt a standard for controlling the risk of heat illness to employees who work indoors. Currently Cal-OSHA has an Outdoor Heat Illness standard. There is concern by many in labor, that employees who work indoors, especially those near or around furnaces and boilers are not being protected from the effects of Indoor heat illness. The Teamsters are supporting this bill. For more information on AB 838 go to: <http://www.assembly.ca.gov/acs/acsframeset2text.htm>

Testing of Wireless Communication device in SFOOV Plane Overhaul - Since March 2009 a team of mechanics and safety representatives have been testing the use of Wireless Communication devices in SFOOV. The use of wireless communication devices in the aviation industry is relative new and there are some concerns regarding their safe use. Last year, an employee from another Air Carrier was involved in an accident and injured while using a wireless device. Some of the reasons that OV is looking to switch to a wireless communication system is that the current system of corded devices create a trip and fall hazard and the cords required frequent repair or replacement. The OV team is working with Corporate Safety and IBT Safety to ensure all concerns and issues are indentified and addressed.

You Have a Right to Know – In April, the Teamsters SFO Safety Committee put out a flyer titled “You Have a Right To Know”. This flyer was to inform our members on their rights under OSHA’s Hazardous Communication (Hazcom) standard. If you are using a hazardous substance/chemical it is important to obtain a copy of the MSDS, read and review it and understand the entire MSDS. It’s is also important to know where to locate MSDS’s. If you’re not sure where to get a copy of an MSDS, ask your supervisor. By law if you request a copy of an MSDS, your supervisor must provide it to you. To obtain a copy of the Teamsters SFO flyer “You have a Right to Know” see you IBT Safety committee person.

Cal-OSHA proposing revision to portable ladder standard – An advisory committee of the Cal-OSHA Standards Board has proposed amendments to the General Industry Safety Orders (and Construction Safety Orders) on portable ladder safety. The revision would affect a number of standards that would add safety requirements such as care and use. No date has been set by the Standards Board when they will hold public meetings on the proposal.

Swine Influenza (Flu) A “H1N1” – In April of this year there was a lot attention focused on the Swine Flu (H1N1) outbreak throughout the world. The Teamsters Health and Safety Department in Washington D.C. put together a number of informational fact sheets on H1N1.

United Airlines contacted all of the Unions and provided them with information on how United Airlines was addressing the Swine Flu issue. Doug McKeen; Sr. VP-Labor Relations and Jim Keenan; Sr. VP-United Services sent a letter to David Bourne; Director of the Airline Division for the IBT, outlining United Airlines plan to address the Swine Flu outbreak.

To read the IBT Health and Safety Swine Flu fact sheets go to:
<http://www.teamster.org/content/review-safety-and-health-fact-sheet-archive>

OV Reverser Sleeve fixture - In April, the OV Managing Director approved the purchase of Reverser Sleeve fixtures for R/H and L/H sides for the Airbus 319/320. Currently, it requires 5 or 6 mechanics to physically handle the sleeve on and off the engine. The use of the fixtures will greatly reduce the potential of mechanics getting a soft tissue injury from this task. This is a perfect example of “engineering” out a hazard. Because of OV IBT Safety Committeeman Mike Woltjen’s diligence and efforts, he was able to convince Management that having these fixtures is a pro-active approach to safety. The lead time for delivery of the tooling/fixtures is 150 days. This affects Docks 2, 6 and 7.

Dock 2 Main entry Door Stand Modification – Mike Woltjen worked with Plant Maintenance and OV Management to have the Dock 2 main entry door stands modified to accommodate Aircraft being on Jacks and preventing Mechanics from falling to a lower level when transitioning from the Aircraft to the stand. This was accomplished by extending the guard-rail vertically. SFOOV is currently looking to purchasing new stands which are designed for entering and exiting 747 and 777 Aircraft while elevated by jack stands and eliminating the fall hazard.

Protecting American’s Workers Act of 2009 – On April 23rd, 2009 the House Education and Labor Committee chaired by U.S. Representative George Miller (D-Calif) and led by U.S. Representative Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.) re-introduced the “Protecting American’s Workers Act.” Rep. Woosley noted that “It’s been more than 30 years since the passage of the OSH Act, and it is badly in need of reform.” Protecting American’s Workers Act or “PAWA” would:

1. Protect more workers to expand and include state and public employees and federal government workers (not currently covered under OSHA).
2. Strengthen Health and Safety Penalties.
3. Improve whistleblower protections.
4. Allow workers and their families to hold dangerous employers accountable by allowing them to contest citations and proposed penalties and other rights.

The Teamsters are supporting this bill. To get more information and details on the bill go to:
<http://edlabor.house.gov/newsroom/2009/04/house-democrats-introduce-bill.shtml>

New Jersey Police issue Tickets for Cell Phone and Texting while driving – The New Jersey Police issued 120,000 tickets during the past year in 18 towns since the state banned motorists from texting or using hand-held cell phones. A report noted that “1,866 motor vehicle crashes were caused by drivers using hand held cell phones in 2007” and “1421 were caused using hands free devices.” In California, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) reports that they have issued more than 110,000 citations to drivers talking on cell phones while driving.

The National Safety Council (NSC) reports that “in a recent (2008) poll by Nationwide Insurance, roughly eight in ten (81%) cell phone owners reported that they talk on their cell phone while driving” and that “about one in five (18%) cell phone owners report that they send text messages while driving.” In addition the NSC noted that studies show “cell phone use is a factor in 6% percent of all crashes, which equates to 636,000 crashes, 330,000 injuries, 12,000 serious injuries and 2,600 deaths each year.”

The NSC has launched a campaign in 67 nationwide areas called “Death by Cell Phone.” The Billboards will target cell phone users on the road. The billboards will show photos of someone who was killed by another driver who was using a cell phone. The NSC believes that the use of a hands free device does not reduce the risk and it is the distraction caused by talking on the phone (even with hands free) that is dangerous.

To learn more about the National Safety Council Cell phone and driving campaign go to:

<http://www.nsc.org/news/deathbycellphone.aspx>

Cal-OSHA Top 10 List of Citations for 2008 – Cal OSHA reports that cited violations for General Industry Safety Orders (GISO) jumped 85% last year, and the percentage of violations classified as “Serious” skyrocketed 105% over 2007. Cal-OSHA cited employers for 1,878 alleged violations for Title 8, Standard 3203, which is a 10% rise from 2007. Heat illness violations were the fifth-most cited. The Top 10 most frequently cited Title 8 standards were:

- Injury & Illness Prevention Program (IIPP)
- Heat Illness Prevention
- Construction IIPP
- Hazard Communication
- Clean, Repair, Service, Adjust Prime Movers, Machinery & Equipment
- Portable Fire Extinguishers
- Reporting Work Fatality or Serious Injury
- Permits to Operate Air Tanks
- Respiratory Protection Equipment
- Work Space about Electrical Equipment.

New Airline Division Safety Committee Representative - Russ Leighton, an ex-accident investigator from the NTSB and currently the Head of Safety for Local 1224 is the new Teamsters Airline Division Safety Representative. Russ held a meeting in Chicago of the new Safety Committee authorized by the Teamsters Airline Division Advisory Board of Directors. The Safety Committee developed recommendations on Go-Team responsibilities and Go-Team Kits. Russ also held a conference call with the IBT United Airlines Safety Committee to go over recommendations. Ground side safety issues as well as accident investigation responsibilities were covered. Russ reports that the information was very well received and further meetings with United Airlines mechanics and safety representatives will take place.