

CWA District 3 Occupational Safety and Health Conference Call

Wednesday, August 23, 2023

Announcements:

OSHA Heat Hazard Alert: On July 27, 2023 OSHA issued its first heat hazard alert, reminding employers of their obligation to protect workers against heat illness or injury in outdoor and indoor workplaces. The heat hazard alert is not a standard or regulation, and creates no legal obligations; it does contain advisory recommendations as well as descriptions of mandatory safety and health standards. Although there is currently no heat-specific OSHA standard, the rulemaking process to consider a standard began in 2021. They are currently in the US Congress mandated Small Business Regulatory Flexibility Act process, to get feedback from small businesses on regulatory approaches under consideration.

OSHA 10 Training: OSHA 10 Trainers will be attending Train-the-Trainer classes in the Fall of 2023 and are on target to begin training required for certain workers performing work on the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program in the 1st quarter of 2024.

Participant Reports:

Local 3908 reported an incident recently that led to an address being flagged for potential violence. A technician was dispatched on a job and crossed through a neighbor's property while working. The neighbor interacted with the technician via a video camera doorbell and the technician apologized and finished his work. Later, the neighbor (also a customer at that time) contacted the Company and advised that if any of their employees crossed through his property again he would kill them. The Company disconnected the neighbor's service and "flagged" the address for potential violence, but did not notify technicians in the area or surrounding areas. They did not flag any adjoining properties, they did not contact law enforcement and they did not notify technicians who could potentially be dispatched to the location. The only way other technicians knew about the "flagging" of the address was when a technician familiar with the incident saw a job in the system and began notifying other technicians. Local 3108 described a similar situation in a high-rise multi-dwelling unit where technicians were told a customer had threatened an employee. That resulted in the whole building being flagged and technicians were instructed to only enter the building with law enforcement present. Local 3704 asked if this could be "red-pinned" in the map app. Local 3120 reported that a customer shot multiple rounds at employees in Company trucks in Hialeah in 2017 tried to discipline an employee who was recording video for evidence. Local 3215 pointed out that many technicians work in large areas, often are dispatched into unfamiliar turfs and could be subject to known dangerous conditions without having been made aware.

Local 3215 reported that the Company is not providing sufficient training regarding lightning to new-hires. One 3215 member sustained a lightning strike and has missed a week of work to date. Local 3908 reported that recently a technician was hospitalized after being struck by lightning. Local 3607 pointed out that fiber pod trailers offer no protection from lightning strikes because the roofs are made of fiberglass and do not offer the protection a faraday cage in a hardtop motor vehicle offers. Local 3704 reported that a manager recently advised a technician that it was "OK" to work outside when lightning is present and the Local promptly corrected him.

Local 3607 reported that during OSHA 10 training they were made aware of certification requirements for flaggers, work zone installers and work zone supervisors. No other participants on the call had heard the same information and were asked to send an email to the Administrative Director at District 3 with any additional information. The issue should also be discussed at the appropriate LGPs and safety committees. Local 3907 reported that when they asked management when technicians should call for flaggers, the Company had no answer. Local 3908 reported that the Company has admitted in LGP and safety meetings there have been issues with flagger certification, but said nothing has been done to address them.

Local 3204 reported there is a PLE course for active shooter training (Hostile Intruder). Similar courses are known as Run, Hide, Fight. [https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf]

Local 3808 reported they have had building issues that included a large hole in a restroom floor and other slips, trips and fall hazards. Local 3215 reported they also had a hole in a restroom floor, and the Company's temporary repair consisted of placing an orange box over the hole. Local 3908 reported that an older Company rental property in Opelika has possible asbestos issues that have been reported to corporate real estate (GRE) but have yet to be addressed.

Local 3704 reported they have asked the Company to provide umbrellas to technicians for shade from the sun when working outside and have only been provided a couple. Local 3215 asked if anyone had received any "cooling towels". A Company director said that every manager was supposed to order them for their technicians. Local 3804 there is a PID for cooling "bandanas". Local 3407 asked if the Company has considered using Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) which is an experimental forecast tool indicating expected heat stress on the human body when exposed to direct sunlight. [This item has been referred to the D3 BST Joint OSH Committee]

Local 3804 reported that repair ticket for ice machines reported to corporate real estate (GRE) have been closed without any repairs being made. Several Locals on the call reported similar issues.

Local 3215 reported that fleet repair tickets have been closed with no repairs having been performed. The Company stated that the fleet department is having staffing problems.

Local 3704 previously asked that making DC FVDs available to technicians. That item is still on the agenda for the CWA/ BST D3 OSH Committee.

District 3 CWA/BST Joint OSH Committee:

The last Committee meeting had to be postponed due to power outages from storms. The next meeting is scheduled on September 6, 2023.

Next Call:

The next District 3 Occupational Safety and Health conference call will be Wednesday, November 15, 2023 from 1pm Eastern – 3pm Eastern.