

FIX THE HAZARDS DON'T PAPER THEM OVER

Season of Safety Campaign



Message 4 • July 2011

Building Union Power Creates Safe Workplaces

One key to building a safe workplace is to have strong local union health and safety committees and for the union to have an equal role with management in setting agendas and running meetings.

One of the seven key findings of our union's Paper Research Action Project study was that union involvement in safety and health was extremely limited. When 173 USW-represented paper mills were surveyed, we learned that management dominates many joint labor-management health and safety committees and that locals had extremely limited meaningful involvement at the health and safety committee level. Despite this, many locals indicated strong interest in our union's training on building and strengthening effective health and safety committees.

What Can Be Done

With greater involvement and better means to advocate for improvements in safety and health we can take charge of the safety in our facilities. We can:

- Communicate ideas/concerns to our local union's health and safety committee.
- Identify hazards and report them to our union representatives and management.
- Support local union efforts to get hazards addressed.
- Engage in identifying and tracking the best possible solutions to these problems.
- Locals can also get help from the International to strengthen their power to improve health and safety. Go to www.usw.org/paperworkers to read "Building Local Union Power" and find the resources you need.

Management Must Bargain Over Safety Programs

Last spring the USW won a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) case involving an employer's unilateral implementation of a behavior-based safety program called "Management Based Safety" (MBS). The Employer refused to bargain with the Union.

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The NLRB ordered the Employer to stop unilaterally changing workers' wages, hours and conditions of employment by instituting a new discipline policy for safety violations or more strictly enforcing its discipline policy for safety violations. The NLRB also ordered the employer to stop its unilateral implementation of the MBS program that excluded the union from participating in accident investigations and disciplined workers for failing to comply with the unilaterally imposed program requirements. The NLRB also ordered the company to reinstate a worker fired because of MBS and to make him and another worker who was suspended under the program whole for lost earnings and benefits. You can read more about this case at www.usw.org/paperworkers.

The Lesson: Safety Programs and mandatory subjects of bargaining. Local Unions should request bargaining over such programs if the Company tries to implement them without bargaining with the Union.