

Monday, June 28, 2004

[HAWAII AT WORK]



RICHARD WALKER / RWALKER@STARBULLETIN.COM
Rey Burgess, safety director for KD Construction Inc., gives a talk on the dangers of heat stress to workers at the company base yard

Caution in construction is vital to safety director

Workplace safety is a personal crusade for me. I lost a cousin in 1970 when he fell from the 12th floor of a hotel while working for another company. That feeling of helplessness doesn't go away. Shortly thereafter, the Hawaii Occupational Safety and Health (HIOSH) division began cracking down on workplace dangers at construction job sites.

I began my career in the construction industry more than 30 years ago by attending construction trade schools and completing the carpenter's apprenticeship program. I started as a carpenter and moved up the ranks to superintendent. I eventually opened my own environmental consulting company and then decided to work for the state as a Department of Labor and Industrial Relations HIOSH compliance officer. Later, I decided it was time to return to the private sector.

President Dan Ching, of KD Construction Inc., saw a need for safety in the workplace and hired me in 2000 to establish a safety-training program for his company. As safety director, I am responsible for setting policy, job site inspections, safety investigations, record-keeping and reporting. I also conduct training classes, which includes the 10-hour OSHA class, first aid and CPR. I have to be up to date on all of my personal safety and safety-instructor certifications.

As safety director, I spend a lot of time with our employees. I encourage them to talk to me openly and share their safety concerns. On a typical Monday morning, I arrive at the job site by 6:30 a.m. for a weekly employee safety meeting. We review possible hazards related to the project and how to avoid them. I make sure all the workers have received proper training for their job assignments.

KD Construction recently received the Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program certification, a program of the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration that recognizes outstanding safety programs.

Reynard H. Burgess

Title: Safety director

Employer: KD
Construction Inc.

Point of pride: Making
sure that all of our
employees go home the
same way they came to
work. No injuries. No
accidents.