

Summary: Occupational Health and Safety Project
Center for Labor Research and Education
Institute of Industrial Relations (Berkeley)
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The project will seek to develop new and innovative ways of working with unions, labor-management groups, and workers, for the purpose of eliminating or reducing the impact of health and safety hazards in the workplace. While safety as such will be a project concern, the emphasis will be on controlling the causes of occupational diseases.

The project will combine educational programs, data gathering and research services, and technical assistance in an effort to close the enormous and growing gap between the places of employment where health and safety hazards occur, and the scientific laboratories and facilities where resources exist to document and control worker exposures to such hazards. Unfortunately, at the present time the scientific community seldom devotes either resources or attention to the origin, impact, and control of occupational health problems of workers--although these problems include the unknown results of widespread workplace exposures to industrial chemicals, agricultural pesticides, asbestos (with hundreds of different industrial uses), radiation, and virtually every known variety of noise, water and air pollution.

During its proposed five year term, the project will develop appropriate education, research and technical assistance resources and services which can be used by workers and their representatives to develop their own organizational skills and capacities for carrying out continuing programs which improve their control over occupational diseases and injuries. We anticipate that the delivery of these services and the use of these resources will result in more collectively bargained joint labor-management occupational health and safety programs, which in turn will generate additional demands for education, research, and technical assistance.

The project will confine its services and working relationships to unions, labor-management groups and workers in Northern California. However, project experiences, successes, difficulties, and problems will be of concern to people in a much wider area--and will be made available to them through an occupational health and safety newsletter which will be developed during the first year.

The education and training programs and services which are developed by the project's staff will include experimental work with education-outreach techniques designed to move beyond the traditional confines of the classroom.

The collection and dissemination of information by the project staff will include both basic and new data on health hazards, on government programs concerned with health and safety hazards, and on negotiated labor-management programs which deal innovatively with health and safety hazards.

The technical assistance rendered by the project's staff to unions, workers, and labor-management groups will be particularly concerned with the negotiation, operation and evaluation of joint programs which supplement government inspection and control efforts, or which go beyond government programs in the development of specific health hazard monitoring, surveillance and control techniques.

The health and safety research work undertaken or coordinated by the project staff will initially be concerned with the search for and the systematic utilization of existing scientific documentation and control data--particularly as it concerns health hazards. In the second half of the project, the emphasis will shift to an effort to fund and to utilize needed new research on the impact and control of health and safety hazards.

During its first year, the full time project staff will be limited to a Director who is a scientist, and a labor educator who is a collective bargaining specialist. In the second and third project years, additional financial support will be sought to permit two or three full time specialized research scientists to be added to the project staff. In each year, additional project funds will be allocated to education and research support and to printing and distribution of occupational health and safety materials (including a newsletter) needed by workers, unions, and labor-management groups.

All project staff personnel will be selected with the assistance of a Project Advisory Committee and the staff of the Center for Labor Research and Education. The Project Advisory Committee will be composed of representatives of labor in the majority, with provision for representation of the academic community and specialists in the field of occupational health and safety.

A primary responsibility of the Project Advisory Committee will be to determine, at least by the end of the second year of the project, whether those unions or joint labor-management groups which can afford to pay for technical assistance or other services rendered to them by the project should be charged for such assistance, with such charges to accrue to the project as the primary means of developing a self-sustaining financial base for long-term continuation of the project beyond its Foundation-support phase.