

Description and Summary of the

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROJECT

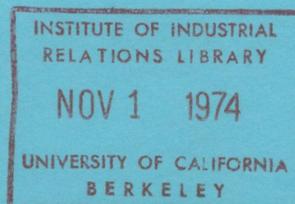
of the

Center for Labor Research and Education,

Institute of Industrial Relations (Berkeley),

University of California

2521 Channing Way
Berkeley, CA 94720 1974.



The Occupational Health Project of the Center for Labor Research and Education, University of California, Berkeley, will seek to develop new and innovative ways of working with unions and workers for the purpose of eliminating or reducing the impact of health and safety hazards in the workplace. While safety problems will be of concern to the project, the major emphasis will be on controlling health hazards and the causes of occupational diseases.

The project will offer (a) educational programs, (b) data gathering and research services, and (c) technical assistance to unions and workers in Northern California. Its primary objective will be to help bridge the enormous gap which exists between the places of employment where health and safety hazards occur, and the scientific laboratories and centers where resources exist to document and control worker exposures to such hazards. At the present time, unfortunately, 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 exposures to industrial chemicals, agricultural pesticides, asbestos and vinyl chloride (which have hundreds of different uses), radiation, and virtually every known variety of noise, water and air pollution.

Another primary objective of the project will be to develop occupational health resources and services which can be used by workers and their union representatives to develop their own organizational skills and capacities for carrying out continuing programs which improve their control over health hazards and 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 greater awareness both of health problems in the workplace and of methods of controlling them.

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. As one example, the first issue of a monthly newsletter on occupational health issues will be distributed by the project in September. The newsletter will permit the staff to communicate with workers and unions throughout California about project activities and results, and about health problems of statewide concern, and about experience under CAL/OSHA.

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 and their control.

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 year 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 hazards.

Funding has been assured by the Ford Foundation only for the first two years of a proposed five year project. However, the foundation's financial support is sufficient to permit the project to begin its work with the following staff members:

-- Leo Seidlitz, Research Scientist; Leo is a Ph.D. in Physics who comes from the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. He has also been an active AFSCME member, and has assisted many Bay Area workers and unions on occupational health problems in the past several years.

-- Bob Fowler, Education Coordinator; Bob was formerly the Health and Safety Coordinator for Lodge 1781, Machinists, Burlingame, and full time Health and Safety Committeeman in the joint program of Lodge 1781 and United Air Lines, covering over 7,000 United employees at the maintenance base, San Francisco Airport.

-- Morris Davis, Education Coordinator; Morris is both a lawyer and an M.P.H., who also teaches at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley, and is editor of the "Journal for Black Health Perspectives," published in Berkeley. He will edit the project's monthly newsletter.

Project consultants include

-- Dr. Donald Whorton, M.D., who is currently practicing internal medicine in Baltimore, and will become the Project Director next year.

-- Dr. Phil Polakoff, M.D., who is practicing occupational medicine in Berkeley and doing graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley.

-- Harry Polland, Economist with the law firm of Brundage, Neyhart, Beeson, and Thayer, San Francisco, who is both project consultant and evaluator.

All project staff personnel were selected with the assistance of a Project Advisory Committee, which is composed of representatives of labor in the majority.

For further information, contact the Occupational Health Project at the Center for Labor Research and Education, 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley, phone Area Code (415) 642-0323.

Fraternally,

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