

IMMIGRANT WORKERS' HEALTH & SAFETY 1-HOUR HISTORY & BACKGROUND WORKSHOP

GOAL: This training is designed for a one-hour session with immigrant workers from a variety of industries and from multiple employers. It is a component piece of the overall Immigrant Worker Health & Safety Training curriculum developed by Make the Road New York. At the end of the training, workers should (1) have a historical context for worker health & safety issues; (2) know some of the current statistics of risks facing workers on the job; (3) know what OSHA is and about their right to a safe workplace, regardless of immigration status. Elem

I. Introduction [5 minutes]

Introduce ourselves and what we will be talking about: worker health and safety / seguridad y salud laboral. Review the goals of the day.

Ask: Why is worker health and safety important? Por qué es importante la seguridad y salud de los trabajadores?

II. Unknown Factory Exercise [30 minutes]

GOAL: This activity is intended to set the *historical stage* for worker safety and health issues, and to familiarize participants with phrases such as “workplace safety,” “hazard,” and “occupational safety.” The handout is the story of the historic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, which occurred in 1911 near Washington Square Park in Manhattan.¹

Note: the participant handout does not include the date, the name of the factory, the location, or any details about the workers. Have participants read the story aloud – and answer the discussion questions included on the handout and below. This exercise is intended to show workers how worker safety and health risks continue – despite tragedies like this fire.

Pass out the Handout to the group. If all participants are comfortable reading aloud, have each participant read 1-2 sentences, going around in a circle until the entire story is completed. If some participants are unable to read, ask for volunteers to read the story aloud.

Discussion Questions (also included on bottom of handout)

- 1) Where in New York City do you think this took place? What borough or neighborhood?
- 2) What kind of factory do you think it was?
- 3) What year do you think it happened?

¹ For more detailed information about this event, see <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>.

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- 4) How many days a week and hours a day do you think these workers worked?
- 5) Who do you think these workers were? Where were they from? Were the men or women? How old do you think they were?
- 6) What are some of the reasons this disaster happened?

As you facilitate a discussion, fill in the actual facts of the tragedy:

- The fire took place in New York City on March 25, 1911.
- The factory was located at 23-29 Washington Place, between Greene Street and Washington Square East in Manhattan, New York City (Greenwich Village).
- The Triangle Waist Company was one of the largest blouse makers in New York City, specializing in "shirtwaists," the very popular women's blouse of the era.
- 146 people died as a result of the fire: 129 women and 17 men.
- Many of the workers were young women, most of them Italian and European Jewish immigrants between 16 and 23 years old. Some were as young as 14.
- They worked nine hours a day on weekdays, plus seven hours on Saturdays (notably less than many garment factory workers today).

III. Current Day Snap Shot [10 minutes]

Next move to a discussion of current-day statistics.² Ask the follow questions, writing the multiple choice possibilities up on the board:

- 1) How many people do you think died each day at their job in 2009?
 - a. 6, 9, or 12 per day [answer: 12 per day]
- 2) How many people do you think die per year because of injuries or diseases caused by their work?
 - a. 25,000, 40,000, or 50,000 [answer: 50,000 per year]
- 3) How many people do you think are injured on the job each year or develop sicknesses due to conditions on the job?
 - a. Between 4-6 million; 6-9 million; or 8-12 million [answer: 8-12 million]
- 4) True or false: latino workers have the highest risk of death on the job? [true]

² Statistics taken from the AFL-CIO Report *Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect*, April 2001. Available at http://www.aflcio.org/issues/safety/memorial/doj_2011.cfm.

IV. Workers' Rights [15 minutes]

Ask for a volunteer to name the law or governmental agency that protects workers' health and safety on the job. Write up on the board "OSHA," and ask participants what year they think OSHA was created. [Answer: 1970.]

Review workers' basic rights:

OSHA:

- Applies to basically all workers
- Protects worker regardless of their immigration status
- Requires employers to provide a workplace free of known hazards. This might mean there are specific rules (e.g., about handling asbestos) or just a general right to have a safe workplace.
- Protects workers' rights to complain to OSHA if there are unsafe conditions.
- Requires employers to provide workers training on how to do their job safely, and to provide workers with protective equipment for hazards on the job.
- Protects workers against retaliation if they report an unsafe condition.

Emphasize that workers facing unsafe conditions should meet with a member of the Make the Road New York legal team for specific advice and help filing an OSHA complaint.

III. Evaluation [10 minutes]

Distribute evaluation sheets for participants to complete. Collect sheets. If future trainings are scheduled, announce dates and times to group.

INCENDIO EN UNA FÁBRICA DE NUEVA YORK

25 de marzo, 4:40pm. Comienza un incendio en una fábrica localizada en un edificio de 10 pisos. No hay alarma de incendios en la fábrica, que ocupa el octavo, noveno y décimo piso. Los trabajadores en el octavo piso llaman por teléfono a los trabajadores del décimo piso para advertirles. Sin embargo no hay forma de contactar a los trabajadores del noveno piso.

Los trabajadores entran en pánico, desesperados por escapar del incendio que se va extendiendo por toda la fábrica. Pero sólo hay un ascensor pequeño localizado en la parte de atrás del edificio y unas escaleras. Todos los días, los gerentes cerraban las demás puertas, salidas y el otro ascensor en la parte frontal al edificio para prevenir que los empleados "robaran" mercancía.

El edificio sólo tiene una escalera de incendios, que está mal construida y en mal estado. Rápidamente se descompone, provocando que los trabajadores caigan desde una altura de casi 100 pies.

El departamento de incendios llega al lugar, pero sus escaleras sólo llegan al sexto piso. Utilizan sus mangueras, pero la presión de agua es débil, y la corriente de agua sólo llega el séptimo piso. Las redes son débiles, y no logran atrapar a las personas que van cayendo desde el edificio en llamas.

Las puertas del edificio abren hacia adentro en vez de hacia afuera, causando aún más caos mientras los trabajadores están desesperados por salir.

Al final de la catástrofe, 146 de los aproximadamente 500 trabajadores en la fábrica murieron ese día. 62 de las víctimas saltaron, se cayeron o fueron empujados desde las ventanas del edificio.

Trágicamente, ya habían ocurrido cuatro incendios en esta fábrica anteriormente. Al hacer una investigación del incidente, se cree que el incendio comenzó al echar un cigarrillo en un cubo de basura que tenía acumulada la basura de aproximadamente 2 meses.

Preguntas de discusión

1. ¿Dónde crees que ocurrió este evento? ¿En qué barrio o vecindario?
2. ¿Qué tipo de fábrica crees que era?
3. ¿En qué año crees que sucedió?
4. ¿Cuántos días a la semana y horas al día crees que estos trabajadores trabajaban?
5. ¿Quiénes crees que eran estos trabajadores? ¿De dónde eran? ¿Eran hombres o mujeres? ¿Qué edades crees que tenían?
6. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las razones por las cuales sucedió este desastre?

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Fecha:

Donde:

Asunto:

Hecho por:

1) ¿Qué piensa de los siguientes aspectos del taller:

	Excelente	Bueno	Mas o Menos	Bajo del promedio	Malo
La claridad y comprensión de la información:	<input type="checkbox"/>				
La presentación de la información:	<input type="checkbox"/>				
La aplicabilidad del taller en su vida/trabajo:	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Los instructores del taller.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
El Taller en su totalidad <i>The training overall</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2) Para usted, ¿qué es lo mejor que aprendió en el taller? Por favor, escriba uno o dos ejemplos?

3) ¿Como podemos mejorar la clase para la próxima vez?

4) ¿Más comentarios o sugerencias?
