



Safety News

Dedicated to ensuring the safest and healthiest working environment for our members

Fall 2024 | Issue 31

In this issue

Training p2
 Health at Work..... p4
 Safety at Work p6
 Safety Calendar of Events..... p10

Message from Jennifer Massey Health, Safety, and Environmental Administrator



Dear Brothers and Sisters,
 This month's newsletter is filled with valuable opportunities and resources for UA members, all focused on pro-

moting safety and well-being across our workforce. Registration is now open for the Safety & Health Conference, one of the largest safety events in the construction industry, featuring NBA champion Scottie Pippen as the keynote speaker. A limited number of grants are available from the International Training Fund (ITF), which can help you attend this important event.

Looking ahead, don't forget to save the date for the 2025 Construction Working Minds Summit, an event dedicated to addressing mental health in the trades. I also encourage you to participate in the Toolbox Talks Competition, a platform that helps reduce stigma around mental health while fostering supportive workplace cultures.

In this edition, we also highlight the powerful impact of the "You Matter" trailer at the 2024 Instructor Training Program, which provided a space for meaningful discussions regarding mental health and suicide prevention. Additionally, we celebrate Rita Nei-

Message from General President Mark McManus: Optimism and Solidarity



Brothers and Sisters,
 Union solidarity is one of our greatest strengths. We each take the opportunity to live up to the pledges we swore to when we were initiated into this great union. We are here to treat one another as our union brother or sister and as we want to be treated. Look after your retirees and mentor your apprentices and new members. We always talk about brotherhood and sisterhood, but we must deliver on that mantra through our daily interactions.

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Our Vision

The United Association and its local unions will apply its best practices and resources to build the most educated and safest workforce in all sectors of the piping industry.

derheiser, this year's Durkin Award recipient, for her outstanding contributions to education and mentorship within the UA.

Finally, the newsletter covers essential safety tips on preventing pinch point injuries and encourages members to take part in safe bolting courses to ensure proper equipment assembly. Plus, we've included important OSHA updates, including new heat safety regulations and guidance on protecting workers from wildfire smoke hazards.

Stay informed and take full advantage of these resources and events to keep safety a top priority. Together, we continue building a safer, healthier future for all of us. ■

TRAINING



2024 OSHA Outreach Training

OSHA 510 Course 2150
OSHA Standards for the Construction Industry

December 2-5, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

OSHA 500 Course 2151
Trainer Course for the Construction Industry

December 9-13, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

OSHA 502 Course 2152
Update for Construction Industry Outreach Trainers

December 16-19, 2024 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Online (Zoom)

Course 2154
Safe Bolting Principles and Practices

December 9-10, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

Course 2170
Opioids in the Workplace

December 10-12, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Online (Zoom)

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January 13-16, 2025, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Register Early for Best Access to UA
ITF Grants

Registration is now open for the Safety & Health Conference, presented by the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA), the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA), and The Association of Union Contractors (TAUC).

Poised to be one of the largest construction safety events of the year, the conference will bring together safety professionals from across the construction industry to explore challenges and opportunities within our field. A range of educational programs led by subject matter experts will equip attendees with the knowledge and tools to create safe workplaces that minimize risk.

Don't miss the keynote speaker, NBA champion Scottie Pippen! There will also be a pre-conference Construction Mental Health Summit and a post-conference Construction Risk Management Summit.

Register and find more information [here](#).



Apply Now for ITF Conference Grants!

The International Training Fund (ITF) will grant \$5,600 each to the first 35 applicants who wish to attend the 2025 MCAA Safety & Health Conference. The grant is available to one OSHA 500 credentialed attendee per local union education fund, and the recipient must attend all three days of the conference.

Begin the grant application process by logging in [here](#) and starting a new grant request. When you complete the initial

request module, select "Add Catalog Items" in the second module, then choose "SAFE20 MCAA Safety Conference Grant" and follow the instructions. After submitting the grant, the attendee is responsible for registering for the conference and making hotel and travel arrangements.

If you have any questions, please contact Jocelyn Crowder, Fund Administrator, at JocelynC@uanet.org or 410-269-2000 ext. 4010. ■



CONSTRUCTION WORKING MINDS

Mental Health Promotion, Suicide Prevention
and Addiction Recovery at Work

www.ConstructionWorkingMinds.org

Save the Date for the 2025 Construction Working Minds Summit

February 24-27, 2025, Dallas, Texas

The UA Pipe PALS (Peer Allies for Life Success) planning committee invites you and your team to attend the 4th annual Construction Working Minds Summit in February. Put the dates on your calendar and check the [Summit website](#) soon for more information and registration.

Apply Now for the Toolbox Talks Competition! Submission Deadline is November 1, 2024.

The Toolbox Talks Competition is part of the Construc-

tion Working Minds Summit, but you need to [apply now](#). The UA has a strong and supportive presence at the Summit, and we encourage our members to participate in this competition. We are proud to report that Brian Murphy from Local 393 won the competition last year!

Toolbox Talks help normalize conversations around mental health within an organization. Creating a supportive workplace culture that prioritizes employee well-being can lead to improved morale and productivity. Toolbox Talks can also help reduce stigma, clear up misconceptions around mental health, and encourage people who are struggling to seek help and find support. ■

HEALTH AT WORK



“You Matter” Trailer Visits ITP with Message of Hope

Brooke Dudgeon knows firsthand the lasting impact of suicide—that’s how she lost her son. She and her husband have channeled their grief and knowledge into [You Matter, Inc.](#), a suicide prevention movement dedicated to spreading love and hope. Their “You Matter” trailer is a mobile mental health resource, which was parked on-site in Ann Arbor at the 2024 Instructor Training Program (ITP).



It was a powerful tie-in to this year’s ITP spotlight on mental health, fueled by the ongoing challenges with mental health in the construction industry, where workers often face high-risk and high-stress environments. Dudgeon advocates for mental health in the trades and discusses the critical role mental wellness plays in the workforce. At ITP, she explained that mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, and burnout, are often stigmatized in the trades, leading many workers to struggle in silence.

The trailer is a tangible reminder that mental health support is available and no one should feel alone. It is designed to be a safe space where workers can find others who’ll listen and also learn more about taking care of themselves and others.

At ITP, the trailer was a focal point for discussions on mental health, where visitors could brush up on suicide prevention



dialog skills, coping mechanisms, and what mental health services are available to those in the trades. There was also “merch,” and Dudgeon reported they sold nearly 300 apparel items and 70 hats and handed out more than 3,500 stickers during the event. The profits from these sales go back into youth programs that raise awareness about mental health.

Dudgeon was enthusiastic when talking about her experience at ITP. She said, “Some events are so hard because we never know how we are going to be accepted with such a tough subject, but ... these men and women were open with us. This was all-around THE BEST and MOST MEANINGFUL event I think we have done. ... The hearts were genuine, ... and I hope if anyone feels like they need a friend, they will look us up and know we are there to support them.”

Bringing the trailer to ITP supports efforts within the UA and throughout the industry to prioritize mental wellness alongside physical safety. By normalizing conversations around mental health and bringing resources directly to those who need them, the “You Matter” trailer is making a profound impact on how mental health is viewed in the trades. We look forward to seeing Dudgeon and her trailer at more events in the future. ■

Future Instructor Training Tackles Tough Topics: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The 2024 Future Instructor Training event featured a panel of Pipe PALS (Peer Allies for Life Success) leaders who took a groundbreaking step in their discussion. They talked about an often-overlooked topic related to the trades—mental health and suicide prevention. While awareness is on the rise about the sobering mental health statistics related to the

construction and skilled labor sectors, the panel noted that instructors and apprentices alike urgently need education and support to address the challenges they face.

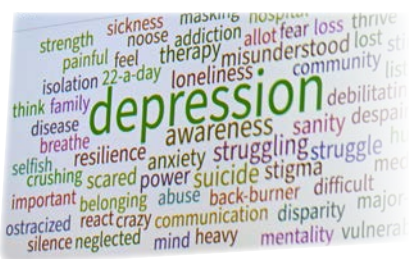


The panel reminded the audience that suicide rates among construction workers are some of the highest of any profession. The high-pressure environment, combined with the physical and mental demands of the job, can lead to burn-out, anxiety, and depression if not addressed. Pipe PALS aims to empower instructors with tools to spot warning signs and offer resources for help, reinforcing that mental health is just as important as physical safety on the job.

Instructors at the event learned about the growing need for mental health first aid training, the importance of peer support systems, and strategies for creating safer, more supportive learning environments. This includes building trust and open lines of communication, where apprentices feel comfortable seeking help if they are struggling.



The panel also introduced initiatives to incorporate mental health check-ins as a standard part of safety protocols in classrooms and job-sites. By making mental health a priority in training programs, the skilled trades can begin to turn the tide on the mental health crisis within the industry.



Instructors walked away from the Pipe PALS panel with a new understanding of the vital role they play in mental health advocacy. This equips them not only to teach their craft but also to foster a healthier and more supportive future for the trades. ■

Durkin Award Recipient Rita Neiderheiser: A Portrait in Education Advocacy and Mentorship

Each year at the Instructor Training Program (ITP) graduation, the UA presents the Martin P. Durkin Lifetime Achievement Award to an individual who has demonstrated extraordinary dedication to education, training, and mentorship. The very deserving 2024 recipient is Rita Neiderheiser.



Characterized by her unwavering dedication, extensive expertise, and ongoing commitment to professional growth, Neiderheiser's contributions to her local union and the UA have been significant. She has devoted much of her career to advancing education within the skilled labor community. Her work emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and the need for strong leadership within her local and throughout the UA. She believes that well-trained instructors not only teach technical skills but also serve as role models and advocates for worker rights and safety.

Neiderheiser is a second-generation member of Sprinkler Fitter Local Union 669, joining in November 1978 and cultivating a diverse career path from apprentice to company owner, Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC) instructor, technical advisor for the local, and UA Master Instructor while maintaining a strong commitment to improving codes and educating others. From March 2003 through April 2009, she made history as the first female instructor working for the Local 669 JATC program. Business Manager John Bodine later appointed her as a full-time technical advisor and entrusted her to represent labor on the Local 669 JATC Committee in July 2011.

Her UA teaching engagements have spanned the U.S. She played a pivotal role in the UA ITP in Ann Arbor, achieving the title of UA Master Instructor and earning an associate degree from the same program. She helped establish and became chair of the ASSE 15010 Committee, which focuses on IT and maintenance of automatic fire sprinkler systems. She is also actively engaged in various National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) committees.



Named after the UA General President who created our Instructor Training Program, the prestigious Durkin Award is UA's opportunity to honor and say thank you to Neiderheiser and others before her whose extraordinary contributions to labor education and training are preparing future generations of tradespeople. ■

SAFETY AT WORK



Pinch Points: Beware and Prepare

Pinch points occur when a body part gets caught between two objects, either stationary or moving. Common examples are shutting a hand or finger in a door or hitting a finger with a hammer. Pinch point injuries are not limited to hands; any part of the body, or even your whole body, can be affected. The most hazardous situations involve moving equipment, like man-lifts or vehicles, which can cause catastrophic injuries if a worker gets caught between the equipment and a structure.

Pinch points occur when a body part gets trapped between two objects, such as:

1. Two stationary objects.
2. Two moving objects.
3. A moving object and a stationary object.

Pinch-point injuries can vary in severity:

- **Minor injuries**, such as bruises or blisters.
- **Serious injuries**, including fractures, deep cuts, or even amputations.
- **Life-threatening injuries**, especially when large equipment is involved.

Preventive measures:

- Conduct thorough **risk assessments** to identify potential pinch points in the work area.
- Develop site-specific **safety plans** to address identified hazards.

Training and awareness:

- Train workers to identify and avoid pinch points.
- Use visual aids and safety signs to remind workers of potential hazards.

Protective equipment:

- Encourage workers to use personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, that can provide some protection against minor injuries.
- Ensure that workers use appropriate tools designed to minimize the risk of pinch points correctly.

Engineering controls:

- Install guards or barriers on machinery to keep hands and other body parts away from moving parts.
- Use automated systems where possible to reduce manual handling of heavy materials.

Safe work practices:

- Implement lockout/tagout procedures to ensure machinery is properly shut down and cannot start unexpectedly during maintenance or repairs.
- Encourage a buddy system where workers can help each other stay safe and identify potential hazards.
- Utilize a spotter and/or a safety watcher whenever you're around moving equipment.
- Be cautious around unsecured materials that may shift when lifting.
- Ensure that tool guards are in proper condition and used with correct body positioning.

Regular maintenance and inspection:

- Conduct scheduled equipment maintenance to ensure that all safety features are functional.
- Inspect tools and machinery regularly to identify and fix potential hazards.

Recognize and avoid pinch-point hazards

The challenge lies in both knowing and recognizing pinch-point hazards in everyday situations. We need to shift our mindset to better identify the activities or scenarios that put us at risk.

From a young age, we learn certain safety lessons:

- You don't put your finger in a bear trap because it can cause severe injury.
- You handle mouse traps carefully to avoid getting snapped because it hurts.

Similarly, in our daily work, we must be vigilant and proactive in identifying and avoiding pinch-point hazards to ensure our safety. ■



The major bolting misconception is that we are all subject-matter experts when, in reality, we often don't know what we don't know. Bolting is a complex science. The parts we need to understand to do our jobs correctly are relatively straightforward, but it's crucial to recognize that we may not be as knowledgeable as we think.

Many of us believe we are proficient in bolting and do high-quality work—after all, we rarely hear about leaks from the joints we've assembled. However, just because we don't hear about leaks doesn't mean they aren't happening. Studies show that many leaks don't show up until weeks, months, or even years after the initial installation (Cumulus Digital Systems, n.d.). According to a survey by the Pressure Vessel Research Council (PVRC), industrial facilities experience an average of 180 leaks yearly (PVRC, 2021). These leaks contribute over 170 million metric tons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere annually (Kleiman, 2023). Worse still, many of these leaks can lead to a fire or toxic gas release, posing significant risks to personnel.

Experts estimate that 75% to 85% of these leaks are due to improper assembly (Spetech, n.d.). Even more concerning, assemblers are 70% more likely to be injured while repairing a bolt-up than during the initial assembly (Cumulus Digital Systems, n.d.). The solution is clear: We must improve our training on proper bolted joint assembly.

Setting up training for our members is straightforward, and the UA is here to help. We currently offer a regional course, UA 2154, designed to equip instructors with the tools and knowledge necessary to teach the principles of bolted joint assembly as outlined in ASME PCC-1. Additionally, we have members who are highly trained in this field and can assist in elevating your training programs to where they need to be.

Investing in this training is not just about compliance—it's about ensuring the safety of our members and the integrity of the work we do. ■

References

[Cumulus Digital Systems. \(n.d\).](#)

[Kleiman, M. \(2023\). Why Leak Detection is No Longer Enough for the Oil and Gas Industry.](#)

[Pressure Vessel Resource Council. \(2021\).](#)

[Spetech. \(n.d.\). Special gaskets & packings provider: Production, engineering, laboratory.](#)

Making the Case for Safe Bolting Education and Practices

By Paul Stout, Pipefitters Local Union 597, Chicago, IL

Do we put enough emphasis on safety when teaching bolted joint assembly?

The short answer is no.

Safe Bolting Courses: Ensuring Safety and Precision in the Trades

In the skilled trades, where high-risk tasks are part of everyday operations, precision and safety are critical. One area where this is especially true is bolting, a task that may seem routine but can have catastrophic consequences if done incorrectly. The importance of quality bolting courses cannot be overstated, and these courses equip workers with the technical knowledge and skills necessary to perform bolting tasks safely and accurately.

Bolting involves fastening components together using bolts, nuts, and other fasteners. As detailed above, proper bolting is vital to ensuring the structural integrity of equipment and infrastructure. Improperly tightened bolts can lead to equipment failure, safety hazards, and costly downtime. In extreme cases, they can even result in fatalities.

Safe Bolting Courses for the Win!

1. Prevent equipment failures

Proper bolting is critical to the integrity of equipment and structures. If bolts are under-torqued or over-torqued, they can loosen, shear, or break, leading to equipment malfunctions or structural failures. Safe bolting courses train workers to apply the correct torque and tightening techniques, ensuring that components are securely fastened to withstand operating conditions. This reduces the risk of accidents caused by equipment failure, which is particularly crucial in high-stakes environments such as construction sites and industrial plants.

2. Minimize human error

Human error is a leading cause of accidents in the workplace. Bolting may appear to be a straightforward task, but small mistakes, such as misalignments or incorrect torque application, can lead to major safety issues. Safe bolting courses teach workers to recognize potential errors and how to avoid them. By offering hands-on training and real-world scenarios, these courses build the competence and confidence of workers, reducing the likelihood of mistakes. The ITF offers two courses: The 10-hour Safe Bolting (7110) and the 20-hour Safe Bolting Principles and Practices (2154).

3. Comply with industry standards

Industry standards, such as those set by OSHA, ASME, and other regulatory bodies, require specific bolting procedures to ensure safety. Safe bolting courses ensure that workers are familiar with and follow these standards, helping companies maintain compliance. This not only prevents potential legal issues but also promotes a culture of safety and quality on the jobsite.

4. Improve efficiency

Proper bolting techniques improve efficiency. Workers who are well-trained in safe bolting methods can complete tasks faster and more accurately, reducing the need for rework and minimizing downtime. By ensuring that bolts are installed correctly the first time, companies can keep projects on schedule and reduce the risk of costly delays.

5. Increase worker and equipment safety

Worker safety is always the top priority, and safe bolting courses directly contribute to reducing workplace injuries. Bolting tasks often involve working at heights, in confined spaces, or with heavy machinery, where mistakes can lead to serious injury or death. Safe bolting training teaches workers how to use the right tools and techniques, such as hydraulic torque wrenches and tensioners, to avoid hazards and protect themselves and their coworkers.

6. Adapt to advanced bolting technologies

Technology in the bolting world is evolving, with new tools and methods being introduced to enhance safety and precision. Safe bolting courses keep workers up to date with these advancements, ensuring they know how to use the latest tools effectively. From digital torque tools to advanced monitoring systems, understanding how to properly handle and apply these technologies can significantly reduce risks in the field.

7. Mitigate risk in high-stakes environments

In environments where critical systems are in place, such as refineries, power plants, and manufacturing facilities, improper bolting can have devastating consequences. Safe bolting courses teach workers to approach these tasks with the level of care and attention necessary for such high-risk operations. This training includes methods for inspecting bolted connections, performing torque checks, and ensuring that each fastener is installed to the correct specifications.

Safe bolting courses are an essential part of worker training in the skilled trades. By teaching proper techniques, ensuring compliance with industry standards, and promoting a culture of safety, these courses will protect both workers and the equipment they work on. As industries continue to advance and equipment becomes more complex, the importance of precise, safe bolting practices will only become more significant. Investing in these courses not only enhances the skills of the workforce but also ensures the long-term safety and success of projects across a wide range of industries. ■

Electrical Safety Courses Customized for Workers in the Mechanical Contracting Trades

The Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) have teamed up to offer courses that specifically address and mitigate risks related to electrical safety that the UA and MCAA members face. Crafted by NFPA's subject-matter experts, the course content prepares workers to identify potential hazards and shortfalls and outlines the correct actions. Participants also stay on top of the latest regulations and have skills that improve workplace safety for themselves, coworkers, customers, and the community.

Courses range from introductory to in-depth and are offered to UA/MCAA members at a discounted rate.

Learn more from the course brochure, the [course info request page](#), or Raffi Elchemmas, at raffi@mcaa.org. ■

2024 OSHA Regulatory Updates and Safety Initiatives

A roundup of relevant topics from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings Rulemaking

Opportunity to comment by December 30

Working in excessive heat is dangerous for workers, both inside and out. It can lead to heat stroke and death. In the U.S., between 2011 and 2022, there were an average of 40 fatalities a year due to environmental heat exposure, plus an average of nearly 3,400 workers per year with work-related heat injuries and illnesses, resulting in days away from work between 2011 and 2020. Due to the nature of the reporting, these statistics are likely vast underestimates.

[OSHA published its proposed rules](#) regarding workplace heat injury and illness prevention on August 30, 2024. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings is a significant step toward a federal heat standard to protect workers. The standard would apply to all employers con-

ducting indoor and outdoor work in general industry, construction, maritime, and agriculture. It would require them to create evacuation plans, control heat hazards, and clarify employer obligations to protect workers. The goal is to prevent and reduce the number of occupational injuries, illnesses, and fatalities caused by exposure to hazardous heat.

OSHA encourages public comments by December 30, 2024, to help them develop the final rule. You can learn more and submit comments through the NPRM posting at the [Federal Register web page](#), or the [Federal e-Rulemaking Portal](#), Docket No. [OSHA-2021-0009](#). ■

Protecting Workers from the Effects of Wildfires

As wildfire risks increase, particularly in the western U.S., [OSHA](#) is stepping up efforts to address the dangers of wildfire smoke to outdoor workers. Although federal OSHA does not yet have a permanent national standard specifically for wildfire smoke, it has strongly urged employers to implement plans to protect workers from exposure to hazardous air quality conditions caused by wildfire smoke. OSHA's guidance includes monitoring air quality through the [EPA's AirNow tool](#), relocating work to areas with better air quality, and providing appropriate respiratory protection such as N95 masks when necessary. Read more about OSHA guidelines in this [Safety+Heath article](#), published by the National Safety Council (NSC).

Some states, such as [California](#), [Oregon](#), and [Washington](#), have already implemented regulations requiring employers to provide respiratory protection when the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaches 151 and mandating respirator use at higher AQI levels (e.g., 500+). These state-level standards may serve as a model for future federal regulations.

Employers are also advised to reduce physical activity during poor air quality, provide breaks in cleaner air environments, and ensure that workers are aware of the risks associated with prolonged exposure to smoke, especially in industries such as construction. As wildfire smoke becomes a recurring threat, the expectation is that OSHA may eventually adopt similar national-level protections to safeguard outdoor workers better. ■

OSHA Civil Penalty Amounts Adjusted for 2024

Per the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Improvements Act of 2015, the U.S. Department of Labor has announced changes to OSHA civil penalty amounts based on cost-of-living adjustments for 2024. Because January 15, 2025, is a holiday, the new rates will be effective January 16, 2025.

OSHA's maximum penalties for serious and other-than-serious violations will increase from \$15,625 to \$16,131 per violation. The maximum penalty for willful or repeated violations will increase from \$156,259 to \$161,323 per violation. Visit the [OSHA Penalties page](#) and read the [final rule](#) for more information. ■

Safety Awareness Dates and Events for Your Calendar

November, Men's Health Awareness Month

U.S.

October, [National Substance Abuse Prevention Month](#)

October, [National Protect Your Hearing Month](#)

November 21, [Great American Smokeout](#)

Canada

November 24-30, [National Addictions Awareness Week](#)

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, please contact:



[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)— a free and confidential (U.S.) resource that connects individuals with skilled, trained counselors 24/7. Call 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) Use the [online Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) or or reach out to the Crisis Text Line by texting “HELLO” to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor.