

# WHY IS WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPORTANT FOR ESL STUDENTS?

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY ESL CURRICULUM

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English as a Second Language (ESL) adult learners are at a greater risk for workplace injuries and fatalities because of their inability to adequately understand workplace health and safety information. This population often includes foreign born, non-English or limited English proficient, Hispanic/Latino, undocumented, farm/migrant workers, young workers, and older workers.

A major risk factor for work-related fatalities for all workers is lack of health and safety training. Language and cultural barriers may call for the use of special training techniques such as use of a participatory approach and proper selection and use of translation methods.<sup>2</sup>

## National Data:

- An average of nearly 13 workers die every day in the US.<sup>1</sup>
- The nearly 3 million nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses reported by private industry employers in 2014 occurred at a rate of 3.2 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers.<sup>3</sup>
- 821,000 workers in state and local government experienced non-fatal occupational injuries or illnesses, which is estimated to cost the U.S. economy approximately \$200 billion annually.<sup>3</sup>
- Hispanic/Latino workers are at a greater risk for workplace illnesses, injuries, and fatalities.<sup>2</sup>
- 789 Hispanic or Latino workers were killed from work-related injuries in 2014. On average, more than 15 deaths a week or two Latino workers are killed every single day of the year, all year long.<sup>1</sup>
- Only one-third of immigrant Hispanic workers received any job safety training and 55% had no workers' compensation coverage.<sup>2</sup>
- There is a disproportionate burden of occupational deaths and injuries on the Hispanic workforce.<sup>2</sup>

*“Workers with limited English-language proficiency often have difficulty fully understanding health and safety messages in their workplaces. This puts them at an increased risk for suffering an injury or illness. The Connecticut Department of Public Health is working to ensure a healthy and safe workplace for all Connecticut workers, regardless of their primary language or country of origin.”*

*- Dr. Jewel Mullen,  
 DPH Commissioner*



English As A Second Language

## Connecticut Data:

The Connecticut fatality rate for Hispanic workers is almost 3 times higher than for non-Hispanic workers. This is similar to other states and national data. Even within job categories, the risk to Hispanic workers is higher. A national study of construction occupations showed that Hispanic construction workers were twice as likely to be injured or killed as their non-Hispanic counterparts.



EMPOWERING ADULT LEARNERS TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS ON THE JOB

## Advantages of a Workplace Health and Safety Curriculum for ESL Students

The purpose of this pilot program is to help ESL students learn about their workplace health and safety rights. The curriculum uses learner-centered activities to engage students in discussions and build on their experiences while utilizing their English language skills. By using a Workplace Health and Safety Curriculum, students will learn to identify and develop strategies to address workplace health and safety scenarios. This Curriculum is an excellent resource for all ESL Teachers.

### Sources:

1. U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), "Worker injuries, illnesses and fatalities", 2014. <https://www.osha.gov/oshstats/commonstats.html>
2. La Noticia De Salud: The Official Newsletter of the Connecticut Center for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos\* Spring 2007 – Vol. 2, NO. 3. \*CEHDL is an NIH EXPORT Center funded by the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (grant#P20MD001765).
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). Nonfatal Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses – United States, 2010. November 22, 2013, 62(03);35-40.

## Contact Us

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