

2004 News Release

Media Advisory

Event: Air National Guard Completion Ceremony

Date: Aug. 8, 2004

Time: 1 p.m.

Place: North Carolina Air National Guard Base
5225 Morris Field Road
Charlotte, N.C. 28208

Under a new program kicked off in March, more than 180 members of the Air National Guard in Mecklenburg County will be able to transfer the training they have received in the Guard to jobs in the private sector, a move expected to help them use their military service to further their careers in the area job market.

The new program sponsored by the N.C. Department of Labor provides to 182 Guard members journeyman certification that they can use to gain employment in a number of licensed trades in the area. The ceremony Sunday marks the first time that members of the military have been able to convert technical training provided by the military to similar status in the private sector. Air National Guard officials expect more than 1,000 guardsmen to be certified over the next six months.

N.C. Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry will present the journeyman certificates Sunday. The NCDOL apprenticeship program has been in existence since 1939. The program serves about 13,000 registered apprentices in more than 1,350 registered apprenticeship programs. For more information, contact Dolores Quesenberry at (919) 733-0348.

Release: Immediate
Contact: Dolores Quesenberry
Date: August 12, 2004
Phone: 919-733-0348

Media Advisory

Event: YEC Auto Kickoff at Carowinds
Date: Aug. 14, 2004
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Place: Carowinds Employment Office

The new program will make it much easier on kids, their parents and the employers when applying for a work permit. The travel time is eliminated and the data is more accurate. The approval or feedback on the requested job duties will take a matter of minutes and will minimize the amount of penalties assessed against employers found in violation of child labor laws.

The pilot program is being tested in Cumberland, Guilford, Mecklenburg and Wake Counties. These counties account for about 25 percent of all certificates issued annually to youth in North Carolina. If the program is successful, labor officials hope to provide the service to youths across the state.

N.C. Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry will be present to officially kick-off the program. The Department of Labor issued more than 68,000 youth employment certificates in 2003.

Youth employment laws require anyone under age 18 to have a youth employment certificate. Youths age 16 or older can perform any job that is not hazardous or detrimental. Rules for 14- and 15-year olds are more restrictive. For more information, contact Dolores Quesenberry at (919) 733-0348.

Release: Immediate
Contact: Juan Santos
Date: August 3, 2004
Phone: 919-733-2355

Labor Officials Launch New Rider Safety Program

KINGS MOUNTAIN-State officials picked the Bethware Community Fair this week to kick off a new safety program aimed at protecting riders who attend the state's 47 fairs during late summer and early fall.

"We've been thinking this out for some time now, trying to make sure that we reach as many young riders as we possibly can," said state Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry. "In the Kings Mountain area, schools are still out for the summer, but we're trying to reach school students with safety bookmarks given out at the ticket booths."

N.C. Department of Labor inspectors, who are responsible for the ride safety inspections conducted at all county fairs in the state, added a key element to their inspections this year: Helping to remind ride operators of the correct use of the ride equipment.

"This new emphasis will serve to remind operators of the importance of their riders' safety," Berry said. "We plan to deliver this message to our operators just before their fairs open."

Berry said labor officials had been thinking for more than a year about initiating a rider safety program to improve safety at the fairs throughout North Carolina. Berry said catastrophic accidents in other states drew the attention of state labor inspectors.

"We've never had a fatal accident involving any of our riders," Berry said. "We've had a very good safety record in North Carolina, and we want to keep it that way. We're going to be proactive and take the right steps to make sure we're as safe as possible. I'm glad the Bethware Community Fair got the opportunity to kick it off."

Labor officials said most fair operators greeted the new safety program enthusiastically. Jonathan Brooks, chief of the labor department's rider and elevator safety section, said about 30 of the fair operators called him about taking part in the voluntary safety program.

"The N.C. Fair Association has been great," Brooks said. "We've gotten tremendous help from the association to get this new safety program off the ground. The people who run the Bethware Community Fair have been just as good. "

Brooks said he planned to be in Kings Mountain Tuesday to present fair officials with the certification denoting the fair as a participant in the safety program.

"Our goal this year is zero accidents for North Carolina (fair) riders," Brooks said.

Release: Immediate
Contact: Juan Santos
Date: August 4, 2004
Phone: 919-733-2355

New Web Site Helps Hispanics with Work Safety

RALEIGH-North Carolina employers grappling with fatal work injuries among Hispanic workers have a new ally to fight the language barrier: a new Web site that provides workplace safety information in Spanish.

The Web site is aimed at helping employers eliminate barriers that workplace safety experts say have led to many of the injuries and fatal accidents that have occurred among Hispanic workers. The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration sponsors the Internet site.

The Web site is aimed primarily at Hispanic employers and employees. The Web site provides links in Spanish to the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, other federal and state agencies, and private organizations that can help employers with workplace safety rules.

The new Web site can be found at
www.osha.gov/dosp/compliance_assistance/index_hispanic.html

"I was very glad to see the U.S. government take this step to help out Hispanic employers with work safety," North Carolina Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry said. "The N.C. Department of Labor has been trying very hard to improve work safety among Hispanic workers, and this extra help comes at just the right time."

Berry in 2001 created a state Department of Labor Hispanic task force to identify special problems that might lead to workplace hazards for the rising number of Hispanics in the North Carolina workforce.

Among major safety obstacles, the task force found that cultural and language differences played a major part in many accidents involving Hispanic employees in high-risk jobs.

The labor department subsequently increased the number of Spanish-language training material, beefed up the number of employees who could speak Spanish and installed hotlines that included Spanish-speaking personnel.

The labor department also became the only state to operate a mobile training unit that can travel the state and provide training and other assistance in either English or Spanish.

"We welcome any help that we can extend to the workers of this state to keep them safe," Berry said. "We've worked hard to make North Carolina one of the safest places to work, and we're going to keep that up."

Release: Immediate
Contact: Juan Santors
Dolores Quesenberry
Heather Crews
Date: December 14, 2004
Phone: 919-733-2355

North Carolina Maintains Record Low Work Injuries

State labor officials said Tuesday the latest workplace injury-and-illness figures released by the federal government show that North Carolina matched its lowest ever workplace injury-and-illness rate in 2003.

N.C. Department of Labor officials said the latest figures released this week show the state maintained a 4.0 work injury-and-illness rate for every 100 full-time employees in the private sector, exactly matching the record low achieved in 2002.

"We're really encouraged because this is not an isolated blip," Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry said. "There is a definite downward trend that shows safety programs are working great. You can't ever rest, but you've got to be happy that North Carolinians have never been safer."

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show the injury-and-illness rate in construction-an emphasis area for labor officials-dropped from 4.7 injured workers to 4.4 for every 100 full-time employees.

In another key area for safety experts, the manufacturing industry dropped from 5.4 to 5.1.

In agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, the rate dropped from 4.6 to 3.7, although the federal government last year did not include hunting in the category.

Overall injury-and-illness rates have been dropping for the last decade. More recently, the injury-and-illness rate in 2000 stood at 5.3. The rate dropped to 4.8 the following year. The figure dropped to 4.0 in 2002.

Coupled with a sharp decline in work fatalities-from 234 deaths in 2000 to 182 this past year-state labor officials point to the new levels of work safety as a sign that different safety initiatives by the labor department are working. Labor officials also credit work safety programs by employers and employee groups as another major reason for the safer work environment.

"This news is the best Christmas present I could get," Berry said. "Workplace safety is my No. 1 priority. I want every working man and woman to go home safe and sound at the end of the workday."