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## Explosion Destroys Kinston Plant

*NCDOL Inspectors Conducting Thorough Investigation of Plant Disaster*

N.C. Department of Labor inspectors continue probing the cause of a fiery Jan. 29 explosion that has claimed the lives of five employees at West Pharmaceutical Services in Kinston.

The Labor Department has assigned eight investigators to determine the exact cause of the accident. The investigators have expertise in areas such as industrial hygiene, safety compliance, chemistry, steel structures and electrical loads.

Although the U.S. Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Bureau identified the accident as a dust explosion and ruled out criminal activity, federal agents did not identify the exact nature of the dust and the spark that ignited the accident.

"It was an unbelievable sight," Labor Commissioner Cherie K. Berry said. "It was a tremendous blow to the company and to the community. My heart goes out to the families and friends who lost loved ones."

Berry drove to the plant the day of the accident and stayed there past midnight with labor investigators.

"This is almost a contradiction in terms, but we're fortunate we didn't lose any more lives," Berry said.

State Labor Department officials will



*Labor One serves as a command center for NCDOL inspectors at the site of the West Pharmaceutical plant explosion. Destroyed section of the plant can be seen at left.*

focus on identifying the source that fueled the explosion and the events that led to ignition. Labor officials will use the information to help other plants that use similar manufacturing processes avoid a replay of the accident at their locations.

The Kinston plant produced syringe stoppers and intravenous tubing.

Damage to the plant was so extensive that Labor Department investigators were unable to enter the plant until five days after the explosion. Friday of the following week, structural engineers were still trying to determine

whether some sections of the plant were safe for inspectors to enter.

Labor officials are not ready to exclude any possible causes to the accident.

"We're going in there with an open mind," Berry said. "We owe it to the people of Kinston to figure out what happened and then prevent it from happening in some other community."

The Labor Department has a consultative bureau that can offer free services to employers who may need assistance with their workplace safety programs. Interested employers can call 1-800-625-2267 (1-800-NC-LABOR).

**Look for new features in our first expanded edition of the Labor Ledger!**



### From Commissioner Berry

Figures released recently brought good news to North Carolina as 31 fewer lives were lost in 2001 than in the previous year. Injuries and illnesses in the workplace also dropped from 5.3 for every 100 full-time employees to 4.8.

We're encouraged by the lower numbers but realize after losing five lives in the West Pharmaceutical explosion in Kinston that this is no time to let down our guard.

Our goals cannot be accomplished without the help of employers and employees across the state.

NCDOL provides free consultative services and training. Our mission is to help businesses improve workplace safety and to reward companies for their efforts.

We're taking major steps to reduce the number of fatalities in the construction industry. Because of the nature of the work, the construction industry consistently has one of the highest fatality rates in the private sector. In March we will hold our first annual Construction Forums to help fight this growing problem. The Construction Forums are designed to bring together leaders in the construction industry and members of our occupational safety and health staff to provide safety tips that can save lives.

*Cherie Berry*  
Commissioner of Labor



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# First Construction Forums Address Deaths and Injuries

Commissioner Cherie K. Berry and leaders in the construction industry have come together to present two construction safety forums as part of a major effort to reduce the number of fatalities in the construction industry. Berry encourages all construction companies, big and small, to attend, as well as employees, employee groups and associations across the state of North Carolina.

In 2001, fatalities fell from 234 of the previous year to a low of 203. The drop in workplace fatalities was the single biggest drop since 1995. While the overall workplace fatality figures dropped in 2001, the construction industry experienced an increase from 45 deaths in 2000 to 51 in 2001. The forums will bring together leaders in the construction industry, along with members of the OSH staff, for a forum that will help employers and employees with safety tips that can save people's lives.

Each construction forum features keynote speakers who will address safety issues relevant to the construction industry. Some of the topics include lessons learned in fall protection and training, subcontractor control, and fatality causes and trends.

The first forum will take place March 6 at Wayne Community College in Goldsboro. The second forum is scheduled for March 19 at Gaston Community College in Dallas.

We would like to thank the following sponsors for their support:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Carolinans Associated General Contractors | N.C. Home Builders Association    |
| R.N. Rouse & Co. Inc.                     | Crowder Construction Co.          |
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| Builders Mutual Insurance Co.             | Safety and Health Council of N.C. |
| Associated Builders and Contractors Inc.  | NCALGES                           |
| N.C. Department of Labor                  | N.C. Department of Transportation |

For more information or to register, call (919) 807-2875.

## NCDOL Provides Back Safety and Lifting Program for Baggage Screeners

The N.C. Department of Labor was chosen by the Transportation Security Administration recently to provide airport baggage screeners with a comprehensive back safety and lifting program.

Baggage screeners consistently have one of the highest injury and illness rates among North Carolina workers. To bring the injury rate down, TSA asked the Labor Department's Education, Training and Technical Assistance Bureau to join in training efforts that will reduce the number of back injuries reported by the industry.

The back safety and lifting programs are customized to fit an industry's specific needs. Bureau staff spends time observing workers on the job and then incorporating the information into the education and training sessions.

For more information, call (919) 807-2892.

# FREE, Electronic Ledger Subscriptions Available

There have been a couple of changes regarding the *Labor Ledger* that we would like to pass along to you, the readers. First, the *Ledger*, which used to cost \$10 per year, is now a free service provided by the N.C. Department of Labor. If you know people who might be interested in subscribing to the *Ledger*, have them call Dolores Quesenberry at (919) 733-0348 or e-mail Nancy Baird (nbaird@mail.dol.state.nc.us.).

Second, the *Labor Ledger* is now a bimonthly publication that will be issued electronically. Subscribers will receive a total of six issues per year that will go out during the months of February, April, June, August, October and December.

We hope you will find the *Ledger* both informative and interesting. Should you have any suggestions or topic ideas, do not hesitate to call. We are listening and are here to serve you!

## DEADLY *Mistakes*

By Steve Sykes

### Avoiding a Silent Killer During Wintry Weather

The recent ice storm that swept across the state in December and the subsequent loss of electrical power had many people scurrying about to get alternative means of heat. The results in some cases were deadly. In Durham and Wake counties alone, more than 300 people were treated for carbon monoxide poisoning. Four people died statewide. Between 1997 and 2001, 414 people died from carbon monoxide poisoning in the United States.

#### What Is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous, colorless, odorless and tasteless gas. Carbon monoxide is a byproduct of the incomplete burning of natural gas or any other material containing carbon. These materials include gasoline, kerosene, oil, propane, coal and wood. Carbon monoxide can accumulate rapidly in an enclosed or partially enclosed space and overcome a victim without warning. Exposure to carbon monoxide can lead to confusion, headache, fatigue, dizziness and weakness that can prevent a victim from helping with their own rescue. Carbon monoxide displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the heart, brain and other vital organs of oxygen.

#### Potential for Death in the Home

A man was killed in Durham after he moved a charcoal grill into his bedroom for heat. Another man was found dead in a running car that had a faulty exhaust system. Even gasoline-powered generators can be deadly when operated indoors without proper ventilation. Make sure your home has an audible CO monitor installed to warn against unsafe levels.

#### Killer at Work

Use of gasoline-powered equipment and tools in buildings or partially enclosed spaces can put employees at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Even spaces that appear to be well ventilated may pose a threat. Carbon monoxide-related complaints received by the N.C. Department of Labor often begin with employee reports of dizziness, nausea and headaches. Watch out for a forklift truck used indoors. Carbon monoxide from the truck's exhaust may reach dangerous levels. Other potential sources of carbon monoxide include gasoline-powered tools such as pressure washers, concrete cutting saws, power trowels, welders, pumps, compressors and generators. Even small engines can produce deadly levels of carbon monoxide.

#### How Can Your Office Prevent CO Poisoning?

- Do not operate gasoline engines inside any building, especially if you can't determine if ventilation is adequate.
- Consider switching from gasoline-powered equipment to electric equipment.
- Maintain equipment and appliances that can produce CO in good working order to reduce CO formation.
- Install CO monitors with audible alarms.
- Test air regularly in areas where CO may be present.
- Provide education about the dangers of CO.

# Commissioner Berry Recipient of Pinnacle Award



Linwood O. Smith, vice president of T.A. Loving Company, presents Commissioner Berry with the Carolinas AGC Pinnacle Award.

Commissioner Cherie K. Berry, who has pushed hard to expand free educational programs on workplace safety, received a construction group's highest award for her efforts on behalf of employee safety.

Carolinas Associated General Contractors presents annually a special award to an individual outside the construction industry whose efforts have contributed to the state's economy. The award to Berry also recognizes her efforts to work with the construction industry to promote workers' safety.

"I am so very honored to be recognized by Carolinas AGC," Berry said. "Their commitment to promoting workplace safety in the construction industry and their willingness to work with the Department of Labor to improve workplace fatalities has been one of the highlights of my administration."

"Commissioner Berry has presented an open-door policy that's enabled us to build a strong working relationship with the Department of Labor," said Chip Murray, safety director for the group. "The commissioner and the Labor Department are really working hard on behalf of employee safety."

The Pinnacle Award was officially announced Jan. 18 at the Carolinas AGC annual conference in Palm Beach, Fla.



# NCDOL

Check the NCDOL calendar each month for the latest updates regarding safety workshops, seminars and other important labor-related events.

The calendar will help in keeping you informed of training opportunities throughout the state.

For more information and accurate updates, call the numbers provided below the event.

Month	Event	Location	Contact
March	6 Construction Forum	Wayne Community College – Goldsboro, N.C.	For information, call (919) 807-2875.
	19 Construction Forum	Gaston College – Dallas, N.C.	For information, call (919) 807-2875.
	26-28 N.C. Mine Safety Advisory Council and Conference	Wilmington Hilton – Wilmington, N.C.	For information, contact James Turner at (919) 807-2790.
April	3 Hickory Safety School	Holiday Inn – Hickory, N.C.	For information, contact John Saunders at (704) 342-6163.
	10-11 Eastern Carolina Safety and Health School		For information, contact S.B. White at (919) 662-4597.
	16-17 Charlotte Safety School	Charlotte Marriott	For information, contact Laura Manns at (704) 342-6163.
May	15 Apprenticeship and Training Awards Ceremony	<b>NEW LOCATION:</b> N.C. State Fairgrounds – Raleigh, N.C.	For information, contact Shirley Barnhill at (919) 733-7533.
	19-23 OSHNC 30-hour Awareness Workshop	Sheraton Atlantic Beach – Atlantic Beach, N.C.	For information, contact Lauren Kash at (919) 807-2896.

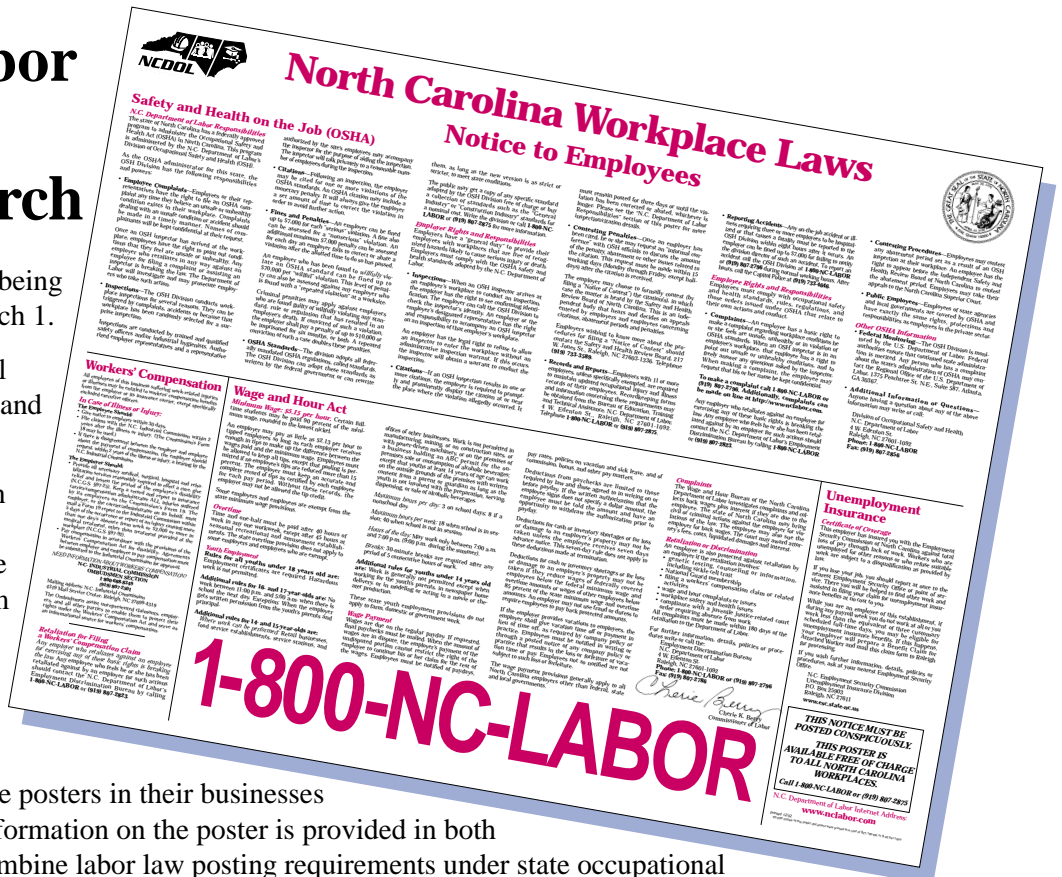
# New, FREE Labor Law Posters Available in March

New labor law posters are currently being printed and will be available by March 1.

Companies seeking a poster may call 1-800-NC-LABOR to place an order and it will be shipped at no charge.

Some poster companies capitalize on labor law posters by selling them to employers who are not aware that the N.C. Department of Labor offers them free of charge. Various companies have charged as much as \$50 for the same information that we provide for free.

Employers are required to display the posters in their businesses where workers can see them. The information on the poster is provided in both English and Spanish. The posters combine labor law posting requirements under state occupational safety and health laws, wage and hour laws, employment security laws, and workers' compensation laws.



# Rewarding Career in New Apprenticeship Program

N.C. Department of Labor officials are making efforts to heighten interest in a career path — boilers and pressure vessels — that appears to draw little interest from today's young workers despite the good pay.

Together with the insurance industry, the Labor Department is starting the country's first apprenticeship program to attract high school graduates to well-paying jobs in the pressure vessel industry.

"This is a good career opportunity for someone interested in learning more about pressure vessels and how we go about inspecting them," Commissioner Berry said. "These are good jobs and they pay well."

The curriculum combines three years of classroom work with practical experience in field inspections of pressure vessels and boilers. Apprentices completing the program will receive an associate degree in engineering. Apprentices also can choose to begin working as full-time employees with the Labor Department as certified inspectors.

The average pay for a full-time inspector is about \$42,000 per year.

Labor officials are expecting a shortage of qualified boiler and pressure vessel inspectors as a large number of current inspectors reach retirement age. There are approximately 220 inspectors in North Carolina. State labor officials expect the number to drop 30 percent by 2004. There are only 4,000 qualified inspectors currently in the United States, and officials expect the number to drop to 3,500 by year's end.

There are 95,000 registered pressure vessels in the state. Of these, about 45,000 fall under the jurisdiction of the Labor Department. The insurance industry inspects the remainder.

Qualified candidates interested in applying for the program may do so through our Web site, [www.nclabor.com](http://www.nclabor.com), or by calling 1-800-NC-LABOR.

The program has been approved by the U.S. Department of Labor and the state Labor Department's Apprenticeship Bureau.

Get your FREE, electronic *Ledger* subscription today! Call (919) 733-0348 for more information.

# Frequently Cited Violations: A Guide to Common Workplace Oversights

By Nancy Wooten, Safety Compliance Officer

## Construction

### 29 CFR 1926.20(b)(2) — Accident Prevention Responsibilities

This standard addresses frequent and regular inspections of the job site, materials and equipment made by competent persons designated by the employers. Between Jan. 1, 2002, and Jan. 12, 2003, the standard was cited during 320 inspections.

1. In the case of a multi-employer worksite, the general or prime contractor is not excused from responsibility of frequent and regular inspections to ensure safe work practices on site.
2. Each subcontractor and contractor of a subcontractor is responsible for his or her employees' adherence to safety and health standards.
3. A written record of the frequent inspections is not required in the standard. However, employers who can prove that they

or a designated competent person are conducting frequent and regular inspections may avoid a citation of this particular standard.

4. Only qualified employees who have experience or specific training are permitted to operate equipment and machinery. Through frequent and regular inspections, an employer can ensure that properly trained employees are using the equipment safely.

5. All equipment, tools, machinery or materials used on a construction site must be in compliance with the standards or must be identified as unsafe by tagging out of order, locking controls to render the equipment inoperable, or removing the unsafe equipment from the site. Frequent and regular inspections will help ensure that all tools, machinery and equipment (which includes flexible electrical cords) are in safe working order and that materials are stored in a safe manner.

*Look for more Frequently Cited Violations in the next issue of the **Ledger**.*

## NCDOL Offers FREE Workplace Safety Training

The N.C. Department of Labor is holding another safety training and awareness workshop May 19. The workshop will help North Carolina employers understand the requirements and programs needed to provide an acceptable safety and health program.

The workshop provides an overview of the 29 CFR 1910, Safety and Health Standards for General Industry. Upon completion, attendees receive a 30-Hour General Industry Card. The workshop also satisfies the entire 30-hour core requirement for the MESH certificate.

The workshop is scheduled for May 19-23 at the Sheraton Atlantic Beach, an oceanfront hotel with a full-service restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Amenities include indoor and outdoor pools, a whirlpool, an exercise room, and a 600-foot lighted fishing pier. All rooms have an ocean view and two double beds.

For more information, check [www.sheratonatlanticbeach.com](http://www.sheratonatlanticbeach.com). The Sheraton Atlantic Beach is offering a special rate of \$55.50 for those attending the workshop. Reservations must be made in advance to receive this rate (1-800-624-8875). Rooms are limited; register early!

Because the workshop is FREE, it will be limited to the first 100 registrants. To register, please fill out the registration form and return to [lkash@mail.dol.state.nc.us](mailto:lkash@mail.dol.state.nc.us) or call Lauren Kash at (919) 807-2896.



# Bulletin Board

## Safety Awards Program

The N.C. Department of Labor has officially kicked off another season of safety awards. Safety award applications were mailed to companies across the state on Jan. 10.

N.C. Labor Commissioner Cherie K. Berry encourages every safe business in North Carolina to apply for a safety award.

“It is a way to show everyone in your community and everyone on your workforce that you value the safety and health of the people working for you,” Berry said.

Companies will be selected for demonstrating outstanding on-the-job safety throughout 2002. Award recipients will be honored in their communities at a safety awards banquet hosted by the Labor Department. NCDOL will honor more than 1,600 businesses between mid-March and the end of June.

The awards require that businesses record no fatalities at the site during 2002. Last year NCDOL established two levels of awards. The gold award criteria are based on achieving a lost workday case rate, which includes cases of lost workdays and restricted workdays (LWC), that is at least 50 percent below the statewide rate. The silver award criteria include lost workday cases but do not include restricted work activity, and the applicant must attain a rate for cases with days away from work (CDAW) that is at least 50 percent below the statewide rate.

Applications must be returned to LaFonda Mauldin, safety awards coordinator, by Feb. 25. The safety awards applications also can be accessed and completed via the Internet at [www.nclabor.com](http://www.nclabor.com).

For more information, call 1-800-NC-LABOR, (919) 807-2908 or e-mail LaFonda at [lmauldin@mail.dol.state.nc.us](mailto:lmauldin@mail.dol.state.nc.us).

## Commissioner Partners With AFMA to Establish Ergonomics Standard

N.C. Labor Commissioner Cherie K. Berry and representatives of the American Furniture Manufacturers Association have entered into a partnership designed to produce a new, voluntary ergonomics standard.

The partnership focuses specifically on reducing ergonomically related injuries in the furniture industry and is unique because it is the first time state government and the private sector have come together to develop voluntary ergonomic guidelines.

Ergonomics is a complex issue that has posed a challenge for both employers and employees. Berry is hopeful that these guidelines will help furniture manufacturers identify and control ergo problems within the industry.

The U.S. Department of Labor and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration have pledged their promotion and support of this alliance. Other groups such as North Carolina State University and the Ergonomics Center of North Carolina will provide information and expertise as needed.

**Have labor-related questions?**

**Call ...**

**1-800-NC-LABOR**