

Introducing the IATSE Safety Hotline

The IATSE has begun a program to provide a place for members to report a hazard found on the job. While the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) puts the responsibility of reporting hazards on the employers, the nature of our jobs means working for many different employers. The required reporting plan does not always find its way to the employees, leaving them with no way to tell someone about a problem. The IATSE Safety Hotline (Toll free: 844-IA AWARE, 844-422-9273) will provide a place for IATSE members to go.

OSHA wants employers to have safety plans, and the General Entertainment Safety course, offered by the IATSE Training Trust Fund, explains many of these plans. Employers use the plans to fulfill their obligation to provide a safe and healthful workplace. Among other things, these plans include inspection protocols, emergency medical care, and hazard reporting methods. The best plans include employee participation in the implementation. A hazard reporting plan would include: Training employees to identify hazards; Identifying people responsible for correcting problems; and Methods to report hazards that need to be corrected. The IATSE Safety Hotline is not intended to take the place of an employer's hazard reporting plan, or to relieve the employer from their responsibilities to keep jobs safe. The IATSE Safety Hotline should not be your first

call to report a hazard, but it is there for the time when the employers' reporting plan breaks down.

Below are some guidelines that members can follow if they discover a hazardous situation at work.

The quick version is:

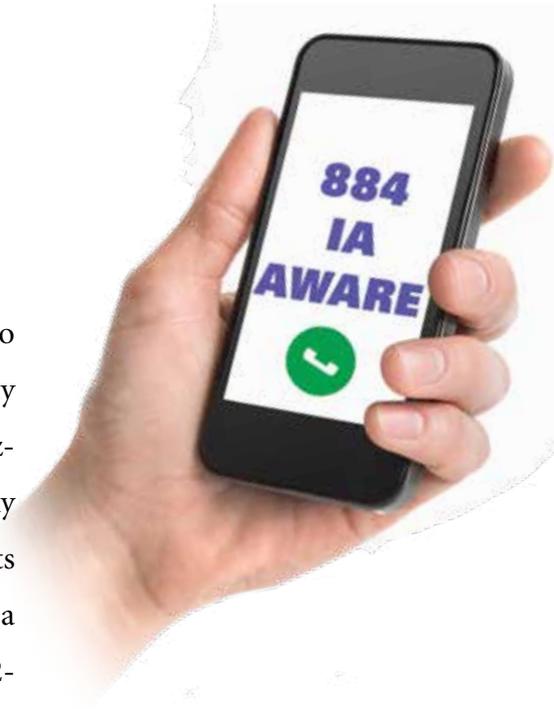
If the hazard is an immediate threat, tell others and clear the area. If necessary call emergency services

1. Report hazard to your employer/department head/shop steward
2. Report hazard to your Local
3. Report hazard to the International (Toll free: 844-IA AWARE, 844-422-9273)

Now that was the quick version, and it may seem a bit strange that you should first report the problem to your employer because many people believe that the employer is the problem. While there are employers out there that cause

many safety issues, they are more the exception rather than the rule. Also, OSHA expects employees to report safety issues to their employers; the employer is responsible to correct the problem. The "General Duty Clause" in the OSH Act requires the employer to provide a safe place to work. Part of our job is to assist the employer with making the workplace safer.

Plans from our employers usually want us to report hazards to our department heads, a named employee, your shop steward, or to the safety department. Anonymous phone numbers are also used for reporting. If your employer has a plan, follow their plan. If they do not have a plan, reporting to your department head or someone close to the boss is the industry practice. And, you should make your Local aware of the problem as well.



Some members feel that if they report an issue, it will be held against them. No one wants to be labeled a trouble maker and lose work. OSHA says every employee has the right to report safety and health issues without fear of retaliation, and there are whistleblower protections. Even with the protection from the Act, members may feel uncomfortable. For this reason some employers have anonymous phone numbers to report a problem. You can

also report problems directly to your Business Agent, Shop Steward, or Local's Safety Rep. Your Local can step in on your behalf to report the hazard and compel the employer to take steps to correct the problem.

If none of these steps get action, call the IATSE Safety Hotline (Toll free: 844 IA AWARE, 844-422-9273). The call will be answered, and you will be able to either leave a message for or talk to a safety representative who will begin

handling the issue. Depending on the circumstances, the safety representative will contact the Local's representative and assist them with the issue, or call the employer directly.

Safety is one of the pillars that the IATSE is built on. Through training, safety committees, safety programs, and participating in standards writing, the International leadership is committed to making jobs as safe as possible.

OSHA 10 OUTREACH TRAINING

*By Alan Rowe,
Chairman, ICAP Committee*

Recently, the IATSE Craft Advancement Program (ICAP) was in Washington, DC to meet with OSHA Compliance Officers for both the Federal and several State Plans. They are very interested in how we work so they can support us and our desire to deliver the absolute best service to our employers in a manner that enables us to protect ourselves, our families, and our futures. This meeting was part of our OSHA Alliance and this outreach is very beneficial for us.

The Compliance Officers were very impressed with our dedication to safety and the success of the OSHA 10 Outreach Training that is being provided by the IATSE Training Trust. If you haven't taken a look at what it offers, you should. It starts with an Introduction to OSHA which explains your rights in the workplace and the procedures for reporting hazards. We continue on with modules on Fall Protection, Material Handling, Hazard Communication, and Electrical Safety to mention a few. You can find more information and a schedule of calendared classes at www.iatsetrainingtrust.org.

There are many reasons for safety training, some are obvious and some are not. While the OSH Act of 1970 does require employers to provide safety training, there are more important reasons than the employer's responsibility. Our industry has always been one of the safest industries in the United States and that is due to the commitment that those of us on the front line have always valued the safety of our stages, sets, exhibition halls, shops, and locations where we work.

Regardless of your opinion of safety training, it accomplishes two things. One it standardizes the safety practices of the industry and puts everyone on the same page. While this may not seem important, it goes a long way to enhancing safety. There are as many different ways to do something as there are people to do it and now everyone knows what to expect. Even the most experienced people I have talked to have said they have learned something from each of the safety classes that they have taken.

The second accomplishment is to cultivate a culture of safety. Accidents are rarely the result of one error and usually require multiple things to go wrong. The more people who have safety awareness, the more opportunities that someone may step in early in the process before the hazard becomes real. Regardless of who has the responsibility to ensure safety, we all have a commitment to ourselves and our families to do what we can to protect ourselves and our fellow crew members. This is part of being a professional and a key reason why we take our jobs seriously and watch out for everyone on set.

No one in our industry wakes up in the morning and says "I think I am going to cause a big accident on set today and watch some people get hurt." What stops bad decisions from being implemented is our awareness and willingness to speak up when we see something wrong. Safety training classes are, at least in part, what gives us that awareness.