



LABOR NEWS

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Mike Beebe, Governor

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James L. Salkeld, Director

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR OSHA SPEAKS IN LITTLE ROCK

Edwin G. Foulke, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA was in Little Rock on September 5 and spoke to a crowd of over 200 at Alltel Arena.

Foulke was named for the position by President Bush and approved by the Senate approximately two years ago. As Assistant Secretary, he administers a staff of 2,200 safety and health professionals and support personnel.

Foulke spoke of the fact that OSHA began in 1971 and since that time has helped to cut workplace fatalities by more than 60 percent, and occupational injury and illness rates by 40 percent. At the same time, U.S. employment has increased from 56 million employees at 3.5 million worksites to more than 135 million employees at 8.9 million sites. He also stated that while this sounds great on paper, one fatality is one too many.

He spoke of our need to improve the U.S. standing in the global economy. And one way companies can do this is by having a comprehensive safety and health program. Statistics have shown that these companies have a lost time injury and illness rate that is ***Contd on page 2 – See Foulke***



(l to r) Director of Labor James L. Salkeld presents a Three Million Work Hour Safety Award to Ed McCall, Senior Driver for 65th Street, and Safety Manager Bob Bingaman at Southern StarConcrete.

SOUTHERN STAR CONCRETE RECEIVES THREE MILLION WORK HOURS SAFETY AWARD

The 130 employees of Southern Star Concrete in North Little Rock were recently presented a Three Million Work Hour Safety Award to acknowledge the hours they accrued between March 2000 and April 2007 without a lost day away from work due to a work related injury or illness. The company has had a safety program in operation since 1998.

The Arkansas Department of Labor, the Arkansas Workers' Compensation Commission and the Arkansas Insurance Department are proud to present safety awards to Arkansas companies who excel in occupational safety and health. For more information, contact Ann Sanders at the Arkansas Department of Labor, 501-682-4329 or e-mail ann.sanders@arkansas.gov.

ADOL DATA FOR 2007 FISCAL YEAR RELEASED

With the 2007 fiscal year having drawn to a close at the end of June, it's the time of year we assess our efforts to "foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners of Arkansas" as we have been mandated by law to do. The following is a recap of the varying services we provided for Arkansas's citizens during the last year.

Forty-nine companies made outstanding strides in the field of safety and health, and were presented safety awards for their efforts. This figure is up from the 35 presented last year.

Eleven regional safety seminars on preventing occupational injuries and illnesses were held in Jonesboro, Russellville, El Dorado, Bentonville, Batesville, Pine Bluff, Monticello, Texarkana, Hope, West Memphis and Little Rock. These seminars were sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Labor and Arkansas Workers' Compensation Commission. Nearly 1,300 participants attended these seminars which are for hourly employees, supervisors and people on safety committees.

Nearly 2,300 films and videos on safety and health issues were borrowed free of charge by companies from our media libraries located in Little Rock, Paragould and Bentonville. This is over 800 more than we loaned out last year.

Our OSHA Consultation Division works strictly with industries and employers who request their help, with preference given to small, high hazard businesses. They conducted 467 safety and health visits to private industries and identified 1,957 hazards at their request.

AOSH (Arkansas Occupational Safety and Health) consultants are responsible for administering Arkansas's laws dealing with safety and health. They investigate

complaints, accidents, and fatalities in public sector workplaces and check for violations. They generated 383 reports from visits to public schools, colleges and universities, state agencies, and other public sector entities. This is an increase over last year's 300 visits. The division also held 102 classes training 3,071 workers.

Additionally, AOSH inspected 3,222 amusement rides across the state, also up from last year's 3,075 ride inspections.

Twenty blasting classes were conducted for 126 attendees in the mining industry this fiscal year. There were also 232 MSHA, First Aid, and CPR classes held for miners with 2,423 in attendance.

The division also held 317 first aid, CPR, and forklift classes for 2,373 other Arkansas workers from 218 companies around the state.

Our OSH/CFOI Division analyzed data on the state's occupational injuries, illnesses, and fatalities, and announced that there were 78 fatalities in 2006 and 5.0 injuries and illnesses for every 100 full-time workers in private industry in the state during 2005. Sprains and strains accounted for over 45.6% of these injuries.

The Boiler Inspection Division issued 6,069 boiler operator licenses, 449 were renewed on-line. Both of these figures were up from previous years. They also found 628 code violations while conducting their routine inspections. Had any of these violations been ignored, they could have ended in a tragic accident. Deposits for the year were \$47,000 more than last year, at \$798,268.

The Board of Electrical Examiners issued 10,819 licenses to electricians across the state, 1,266 renewed on-line. Total deposits were \$341,225.

Our Elevator Safety Division posted and filed 7,967 inspection reports and issued 4,396 Certificates of Operation. Their deposits totaled \$406,339, over \$12,000 more than they reported last year.

Our Labor Standards Investigators conducted 2,298 wage and hour and wage claims

inspections during Fiscal Year 2007. They subsequently collected \$81,423 in minimum wage and overtime restitution, over \$35,000 more than they collected last year. They also collected \$57,183 in child labor civil money penalties. Nearly 500 wage claims were filed with the division for unpaid wages, severance pay, sick pay, vacation pay, holiday pay, and unauthorized deductions, commissions, and bonuses. And, \$58,287 was subsequently collected and returned to claimants by the division.

The Prevailing Wage Division issued 479 wage determinations on projects with a total estimated value of \$573,005,594. The division also collected and disbursed \$77,453 in back wages to 124 workers. This is up from the \$27,140 disbursed to citizens last year.

Our state mediator participated in 37 contract negotiations and attended 79 other bargaining sessions, both increases over last year's figures.

The Legal Division reported collecting \$72,647 for the Labor Standards and Boiler Divisions this fiscal year.

The Planning and Publications Division mailed out nearly 31,000 newsletters to Arkansas workers, in addition to printing 10,000 posters, 30,000 brochures, and 7,600 booklets.

If you would like a copy of the Arkansas Department of Labor's 2007 Annual Report, call 501-682-4546, or e-mail Sharon.adams@arkansas.gov.

FOULKE – Contd. from page 1

30% below others, thus reducing their workers' compensation and insurance rates, thus saving them money and keeping more jobs in America.

Foulke closed his comments by thanking everyone for their commitment to safety and health, which they were demonstrating by their involvement in SHARP, VPP, and other free compliance assistance programs offered through OSHA.



IN THE WORKS

☞ Paid holiday and vacation leave were the most commonly provided employee benefits in the private sector in the U.S. in March 2007, with 77 percent of workers having access to it. Paid jury duty and funeral leave benefits were also common, available to 71 and 69 percent of workers respectively. Additionally, 57 percent had paid sick leave, 49 percent had paid military leave benefits, and 38 percent had paid personal leave.

☞ Fifty-two percent of U.S. workers in private industry participated in a medical care plan in March 2007. Most were in plans requiring employee contributions for both single and family coverage. Employee contributions for medical care premiums averaged \$81.37 per month for single coverage, and \$312.78 per month for family coverage. About half of workers participated in outpatient prescription drug coverage, and small proportions participated in dental and vision care coverage.

☞ While fatal highway incidents remained the most frequent type of fatal work-related event in the U.S., accounting for nearly one out of four fatal work injuries, the number of highway fatalities fell 8 percent between 2005 and 2006. The 1,329 fatal highway incidents in 2006 was the lowest annual total since 1993.

☞ On the days that they worked, 21 percent of employed persons in the U.S. did some or all of their work at home. Men and women were about equally likely to work at home. Multiple jobholders were much more likely to work at home than were single jobholders, and employed persons with higher educational attainment were also much more likely to work at home than lower levels of education.



AMERICA'S WORKFORCE: HEALTHY, COMPETITIVE AND GROWING

U.S. Labor Department released report
on state of U.S. workforce – Labor Day,
2007

The U.S. Department of Labor released a new report on Labor Day highlighting major trends in the American labor market and the importance of education and skills training to maintaining the competitiveness of America's workforce.

"America's workforce is the envy of the world! Despite some recent market uncertainties, the fundamentals of the American economy are strong, unemployment is near record lows, overall compensation continues to increase, and more than 8.3 million new jobs have been created since August 2003," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. "What our country does face is a 'skills gap.' In a worldwide economy, the competitive strength of America's workforce lies in its productivity, innovation, creativity and knowledge base. The majority of new jobs created over the next decade will require more skills, higher education and pay above average wages, so it is important to ensure that workers are able to get the education and training they need to access these growing opportunities."

Here are some of the current trends that illustrate the state of the economy and importance of education and job training.

- In the first half of 2007, the national unemployment rate ranged between 4.4 percent and 4.6 percent. That is a **full point lower** than the average 5.7 percent unemployment rate of the 1990s.
- As of June 2007, more than 8.3 million net **new jobs** had been created in the U.S. since August 2003.
- Job growth in 2006 alone netted 2.3 million new jobs.
- By June 2007, total jobs reached an **all-time high** of 138.0 million – nearly 5.5 million more jobs than the pre-recession high of February 2001.
- Through June 2007, the United States experienced 46 consecutive months of job growth.
- Unfilled job openings have increased by one million since 2003 and averaged 4.2 million vacancies at the end of May 2007.
- Between 2001 and 2006, non-farm labor productivity increased 15.3 percent and real compensation per hour increased 7.2 percent.

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- Between 2001 and 2006, much employment growth was in industries with above average hourly earnings. Employment in professional and business services, construction and financial activities (all paying above average) increased 2.5 million.
- Between 2001 and 2006, employment in jobs associated with bachelor's degree or higher educational attainment increased 18.8 percent – faster than any other category.
- In 2006, employer-paid benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, retirement savings, life insurance, workers' compensation insurance, Social Security contributions and unemployment insurance amounted to 30 percent of average total compensation.
- The United States leads the world in manufacturing, accounting for 21 percent of worldwide manufacturing value-added, followed by Japan (13 percent), China (12 percent) and Germany (eight percent).
- With gross domestic product per hour worked at \$48.30 in 2005, American workers are among the most productive in the world.
- Between 1970 and 2006, the proportion of persons age 25 to 64 with a bachelor's degree or higher more than doubled.



ED HOUSE NAMED DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF ADOL

Governor Mike Beebe, recently appointed Ed House to the position of Deputy Director of the Arkansas Department of Labor.

House has been State Mediator with the department since 1991. He has also served as a member of the advisory board and coordinator of the Annual Arkansas/Labor Management Conference.

A former labor leader, House was associated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers as President of Local 1948, and later became President of the State Council of Machinists, the Political and Education Branch of the Union.

House and his family are from Swifton, Arkansas.