COORDINATOR’S CORNER

By Luis Vazquez

Holiday greetings to all! After much preparation and reading through grant application details, the UAW submitted their proposal to the NIEHS for another five year grant. We submitted it before the November 23 deadline. All we have to do now is wait. Some of the other NIEHS grantees have even asked me to write a song about the grueling application process. Please believe me when I say that taking a project like ours and shrinking it down to 25 pages is no small feat.

On behalf of Director Marty Winiarski, Assistant Director John Rupp, and the grant training staff, we want to thank all LUDLs for the input you offered during discussions on the grant during the TTT in October. Your thoughts and stories were very useful and were incorporated into the grant application. We also thank you for putting together your bio sketches for inclusion in the grant submission. In reviewing the collective experience and training of UAW LUDLs, one is truly struck by your impressiveness as a group. We believe that grant reviewers will take notice of the breadth of experience of the UAW’s LUDL community.

We should be getting word sometime in March 2010 – after a Peer Review by a NIEHS Special Emphasis Panel – as to whether or not our application will go on to Full Review with the National Advisory Council and given a priority score. The Council meets in May 2010, and funding decisions are then communicated to Marty Winiarski, our project’s Principal Investigator. As soon as we know, you will know.

I think UAW submitted a strong application to NIEHS, with the LUDL program being a key feature. The following paragraph comes from the UAW’s Project Summary, which explains our project’s relevance to Public Health and sums it all up quite nicely: A strong link between what is learned and the needs of the population related to public health exists. The UAW program accomplishes the objective of preventing workplace illness and injury through active involvement in the learning process, using a problem-based, worker-centered approach. University of Michigan evaluation studies validate use of peer trainers to effectively deliver hazardous materials information to fellow workers.
Train The Trainer Class of 2009

Groups pose after presenting their sections.

Below and to left: Tim Kearney CSP tells the group about air monitoring equipment and respirators. Tim is from Argus-Hazco.
December 3, 2009

REMEMBERING BHOPAL – AND WHY WE TRAIN HAZWOPER
By Luis Vazquez

On December 3, 2009, we commemorate the 25th anniversary of an incident that provided the impetus to the US Congress to enact legislation to address environmental and occupational safety and health concerns at chemical production facilities. The incident at a Union Carbide facility in Bhopal, India, involving a release of deadly methyl isocyanate, still has repercussions today.

Those thousands of people injured in the chemical release still suffer from the effects of their injuries, and many have died as a result of the exposures they incurred during that fateful time. Most have never received any kind of compensation for their injuries and illnesses. The loss of life was staggering, and should be a continuing warning to us all of the importance of prevention of further chemical release incidents.

Prevention is the primary goal of our training programs, and the training we have provided helps workers and management achieve that goal. That is why one of the main focuses of our training program is to scrutinize facility Emergency Response Plans. By raising awareness of potential chemical disasters and providing education worker to worker, the UAW LUDL program helps to achieve the primary public health objective of prevention. Prevention of loss of life, prevention of illness and injury, and prevention of other incidents like Bhopal.
National Safety Council Meets in Florida
By Caroline Ross

I had the opportunity to attend the National Safety Council Congress and Expo October 25th – 28th in Orlando, Florida. It featured several especially interesting keynote speakers and presenters.

The 2009 Distinguished Service to Safety Award, the highest council award, was presented to seven individuals representing the NSC Board of Directors, Business & Industry, Chapter Services, Construction, Labor, Transportation, and the Utilities Division. This award was first presented in 1942 to recognize individuals and companies who significantly supported the U.S. workers during World War II by reducing occupational injuries. The recipient of the Labor Division award was Tim McClain CSP, the former director of the UAW Education/Health and Safety Department. I am extremely proud for him to receive this award. Tim was my mentor and advisor when I was appointed to my position as Health & Safety rep with Local 6000. It was great to spend some time catching up with him since he retired.

Although all of the speakers were interesting and all topics were important, there were two that I particularly enjoyed. Charlie Morecraft, was one of the keynote speakers on Tuesday, and he really underlined a significant health and safety problem. Charlie related his story about an accident he suffered 30 years ago at the refinery where he worked. He suffered burns over 80% of his body, and still today, is undergoing surgery to repair muscle damage, all because he thought he was too cool to wear safety glasses. He thought nothing would ever happen to him. Because he did not have on the proper PPE, he was accidentally sprayed in the eyes with a chemical. The chain of events from that incident caused an explosion and fire at his facility and put him in extreme physical agony for years. He said the cost for this mistake was his health, his family (divorce, and children grew up without him while he was in the hospital), $5 million to repair the facility and $1.7 million for medical expenses to date. All because he did not want to wear safety glasses!

Another interesting session was, Bill Williams, Vice President, Maersk, Inc., who related the dramatic tale about when the Maersk Alabama was hijacked by pirates, in April, 2009 and its captain was held hostage for four days. He spoke of the details of the captain’s rescue, and how Maersk’s crisis management system trains, communicates, and equips its employees to face such dangers and return to safety.

The expo was HUGE and took three days to cover most of it. I admit I did not cover it all. I was pleasantly surprised to meet fellow LUDL, Danny MacEachern - UAW Local 5286, while standing in a line. That southern drawl is hard to miss.

I attended as many classes as possible each day and gathered a lot of training material that I will share with everyone. Although winter is approaching fast, I was happy to return from the 95 degree, high humidity In Florida. I love Michigan.

OSHA 30 HR. HELD AT GE JET ENGINE PLANT
By Jack Tussey

Mike Lee and I facilitated an OSHA 30 hour safety course on October 19 through 23rd at the GE Jet Engine Plant, UAW Local # 647 in Evendale, OH. We had 29 students from management and labor, and one firefighter from the Evendale Fire Department.

The class started out with some students not sure of the reason they were there. Some were attending because the training was mandatory, and some because they were curious.

In all the classes that I have been involved with in the past two years, the class has always begun the same way. By the end of the first day, we see the class begin to come together and understand that workplace safety is not just a catchy phrase, but an achievable goal that is reasonable for everyone.

Throughout the course, Mike and I challenged the class to look at safety in a new way and practice those critical safety skills not only at work, but also at home. By the time the week was half over, the students are working as one class and are not separated into union and management. By this time, the trainees are working together on assignments and brainstorming safety issues in their assigned areas. Every class has experts in certain fields. We use these experts as a resource to convey the importance of safety in that given task.

I had several students come up to me during the class and say, “This is the best class I have ever attended here.” Mike and I responded by telling them that it is because they are contributing to the class. Every worker has something of value to add to the group. We can all learn from each other.

Continued on page 8
HAZWOPER TRAINING PLAYS CRITICAL ROLE IN LIMITING DAMAGE FROM REFINERY FIRE

On Friday, October 23, 2009, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, a number of UAW Local 2337 members who work for the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB), were activated to respond to a massive explosion and fire at a refinery managed by the Caribbean Petroleum Company, which operates the Gulf gasoline brand on the island. About 20 of the 40 fuel storage tanks at the refinery were involved in the fire, which erupted after an explosion occurred during filling of one of the tanks. A faulty automatic shutoff valve is suspected in leading to the initial explosion from gasoline vapors that escaped the tank. The fire took a few days to extinguish, and more than 1,500 residents were evacuated from the area and downwind of the refinery. Smoke from the blaze could be seen for many miles, and there were concerns that peoples’ respiratory health could be affected. After investigating, agents from the US BATF and the FBI ruled out terrorism as the cause of the explosion. The US Chemical Safety Board has activated a team to fully investigate the incident.

Local Union President Yolanda Martinez-Quesada and other members of Local 2337 were assigned to work at the Emergency Operations Center in San Juan, Puerto Rico that day. They played a vital role in initial emergency response and follow up to this disaster. Among the 26 EQB emergency responder personnel involved in the response to this disaster, 10 had received either a 40-hour HAZMAT Technician course, or an 8-hour Hazmat Refresher from the UAW in 2007 or 2008. These personnel set up air and water monitoring and sampling regimens, assessed health of co-responders, and provided regular reports to the Puerto Rico Governor’s Office. Prior to being deployed to this disaster, the UAW-trained emergency responders had identified critical gaps in respiratory protective equipment, and in outdated calibration of air monitors. These items were taken out of service, meters were calibrated, and missing parts of respiratory equipment were purchased. No responder personnel were injured, and no responder personnel experienced health effects from the incident or response. The actions taken by the EQB responders, as a result of their UAW training, played a critical role in protecting their health and safety. Some UAW-trained EQB personnel continue to be involved in the sampling and cleanup operations.

CNN quoted Pedro Nieves, chairman of the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board, as saying that steps had been taken to prevent fuel from entering San Juan’s nearby bay. “We have been monitoring the water visually, and we have installed preventive pads and other material to contain a spill,” Nieves said. “No oil has reached the water.”

Photo of smoke from refinery fire taken by UAW Local 2337 member
THE VALUE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING IDEALS

By Maria Enriquez

“A window in time…”

We are braver than we believe, stronger than we seem and smarter than we think. We have done so much with so little for so long that it appears to be easy for us… NOT!

As a Spanish-Speaking Latina involved with the UAW Health & Safety LUDL Program since about 2003/4, the program has provided me a unique opportunity to reach and educate both Latino and non-Latino UAW members across the country. Because of this training program, I have grown in my abilities and skills and believe that I have been able to help make a difference for others. I would like to share some of my experiences as a result of my training.

First, let me share with you how many Latinos there are in the US. According to the last census numbers there are 4.2 million Latinos in the Midwest, comprising 10% of the Latino population in the nation. To bring it home, Latinos are 6% of the population in the region. To give you additional insight into who we are, we as Latinos have worked in agricultural fields, laid railroad tracks, worked in slaughter houses, auto factories, domestic and human services. That is not to say that our faces are not among doctors, teachers, nurses, writers, just to mention some of the other areas that you will find us. However we do not all enjoy the opportunity of working in a safe environment. The US census and statistics from OSHA also tell us that as a group we have one of the highest on-the-job mortality rates.

Recently in 2007, I translated sections of our IER training manual from English into Spanish. This material was used in class to teach monolingual Spanish-Speaking UAW members from Puerto Rico for the worker-trainer program. Even though they spoke a different dialect from mine, they understood the training and were able to even improve on it for their own training purposes back in Puerto Rico.

The IER manual includes training in a variety of health hazards and solutions. In 2009, because of my training, I was able to understand the dire immediate need of the poor people in Galveston, Texas following Hurricane Ike (September 12-13, 2008). Many of the homes, boats and things were taken care of and restored or rebuilt for the upper class people. However the poor sections of the city continued to suffer with water damage, black mold, and contaminated water. As a result of my trainings at Black Lake, I understood the effect that black mold has on people and became involved in organizing a group of Michiganders who were interested in helping these folks in Galveston. We organized a fund raising event that not only raised over $2000, but we also raised awareness of the plight of many in Galveston to people from our Spanish-Speaking community.

In September of 2009, I did a workshop for U of M Latina/o Labor Studies Institute. The workshop was intended to provide essential information necessary to develop a more progressive agenda dealing with issues important to our communities and the labor movement. It is about an agenda where worker solidarity is based on an understanding of how politics, the economy and media are so tightly interwoven and often have a negative impact on unions and Latina/os.

A direct result of this workshop was the creation of the National Labor Media Project (NLMP). There are plans to find funding opportunities to help grow this project. It is also planned that annual workshops will continue to be held for conferences that serve Latina/os. We want to make sure that a positive picture of the union is projected to counteract the negative way that unions are depicted in the media, and we want to stress the importance of educating Latina/os in Occupational Health and Safety. This entire effort was related to the lessons that I have been taught through the UAW Health & Safety LUDL Program. It is a program which I am proud to be a part of. I have learned to hone my presentation skills to be able to reach people from different backgrounds.

These and many other activities I have been involved in have been opportunities where I can do outreach and reflect the positive impact of what the UAW has to offer its members and our community. I believe we are a force that prepares to serve our communities by offering our training to our union brothers and sisters as well as to other entities, including agencies, and church groups, lessons which could save lives.

The power in health and safety training is that it prepares us to always be ready for unexpected incidents, which could become major incidents. The solutions are in the knowledge of prevention - always be prepared for the unexpected.
Greetings, I hope everyone is doing well. I thought I would write a few lines to let everyone involved in the LUDL program know how much it has helped and taught me in a few short years. I would first like to thank Vice President Holiefeld, and Director of Region 8 Gary Casteel for allowing me the opportunity to serve as the Health & Safety Rep, and an LUDL for my Local and Region. I would also like to thank the UAW Education/Health & Safety Department for the training I have received.

I feel I have learned what is necessary to serve our membership and still have much more to learn. I really enjoy the TTT training we have each year and the opportunity to go out to different locals and teach the importance of working safe, and giving them the tools and training needed to accomplish what we as a union are trying to stress, that everyone has the right to go home every day in the same manner as they arrive at work (injury free!)

I take pride in what all of us do to ensure that our membership is second to none when it comes to Health & Safety. I have enclosed in this letter a special letter from Vice President Holiefeld congratulating me for completing my Certified Health & Safety Specialist program, since without his help I couldn't have had the opportunity to receive this training.

Well I am looking forward to the upcoming training at my facility. I will take a few pictures and write a few paragraphs on the feedback I get from the participants. In closing, I would like to thank all of the LUDLs for their support.

Thanks!

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Danny MacEachern
UAW Local 5286
112 West Trade Street
Dallas, NC 28034

Dear Brother MacEachern:

I, along with the International Union, wish to extend our congratulations to you for your early completion of the UAW Chrysler Health and Safety Specialist Certification Program.

We are very proud of the excellent performance of our Internationally-appointed representatives. We are confident that you will perform your duties in the same tradition that has made our programs such a valued resource.

Hard work and dedication are the backbone of the UAW and we commend you for your commitment and continued service to the UAW, once again, congratulations.

Fraternally,

General Holiefeld
Vice President and Director
UAW Chrysler Department
LOTO Training at Daimler Freightliner, November 9 – 13, 2009
My Experience as a Health and safety LUDL in a nutshell.
I recently took a trip to Gastonia, North Carolina to Danny Mac’s facility. In case
you don’t know, Danny works for Freightliner, and is appointed as the UAW Local
5286 full time Health and Safety rep. I have been down to Gastonia once before with
Sherrod Elledge and Steve Mitchell, doing a 40 hour IER. This time I rode with
Mike Lee and our agenda was LOTO. The plan was to start Tuesday at 7 AM – 11
AM and then come back and teach another class from 3 PM – 7 PM. We did have
to adjust our schedule for Thursday to accommodate the 3rd shift. Friday was a full
day of 40 IER Awareness training. A total of 32 people attended our LOTO Program
throughout the week.

The facility manager did state that “This was the best LOTO class that he has
attended.” It is certainly nice to hear such comments and the fact that nobody dozed
off also lets ya’ll know that things are going well.

I noticed on the way down to North Carolina that the further south we went,
the more difficult it became to understand Mike’s speech. I also noticed that the
further south we went, the more I started to crave “liver mush.” My father-in-law
introduced me to this southern delicacy, but he referred to it as “liver pudding.”
Whether you call it liver mush or liver pudding, you still can’t get a good sense of
what it is until you tried it. The beans and corn bread were also delicious. First time
trying it mixed together.

It was a pleasure having the opportunity to experience the training and to gain
from that experience.

In Solidarity,
Eric Johnson

OSHA 30 hr., continued from p. 4
The last day of class is always bit-
tersweet; Mike and I are happy that
we have had a successful class, but
sad to see the end because of the new
friendships that have been made. Mike
tells the class that every one of us has
strengths and weaknesses, but collect-
ively, we’re pretty darn smart. We can
and must work together to improve
safety in the workplace and at home.
I asked the class the question, “Do
you feel differently about safety today
than when the class started?” The class
smiles showed us that they did.

This is the reason we as Safety
LUDLs leave our families and work-
place to teach. It is not easy to leave
our comfort zone and travel to dif-
f erent locations. But know this, the
experience and knowledge you have in
safety and health pale in comparison
to the care you have for the workers
we train.

Happy
Holidays

Please keep Brian Fredline in your thoughts and prayers as he recovers from
surgery. See Brian’s excellent letter in the Nov./Dec. issue of Solidarity.

Save the Date
April 25-29, 2010
Health & Safety
Conference
Black Lake
Onaway, MI