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An investigation of the adequacy of health and safety training among immigrant construction workers

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ABSTRACT

The presence of immigrants on South African construction sites has long been noted, with recent reports indicating that the number of immigrants employed on construction sites has been on the increase in the past decade. Incidental to this, construction related accidents have also been on the increase. With reports from other parts of the world suggesting that immigrants are more prone to accidents than natives, this research sought to investigate the adequacy of training provided to immigrants, since the lack of Health and Safety training has traditionally been associated with poor safety performance.

A questionnaire survey was conducted among immigrants on selected construction sites run by large firms in the Johannesburg area. The questionnaire probed into the types of training provided, content of the programmes, duration of the programmes, satisfaction with the training and injury history. The survey results revealed that the most common types of training were Site induction and Toolbox talk; and that the majority of immigrants on construction sites run by large-size construction firms received a minimum of three hours safety training and the training content covered all minimum requirements stipulated by O'Connor. The research concluded that although the construction companies were not fully complying with the OSH Act regulation, the Health and Safety training received by the majority of immigrants on construction sites run by large–size companies was adequate to enable them to safely conduct their tasks without endangering themselves and their colleagues. The research recommended a further investigation of the training practices in use for implementation on all sites.