

Temporary workers' safety to be probed

Insurance Times: October 1, 2002, Vol. XXI No. 20

WASHINGTON — At the request of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, the General Accounting Office will investigate whether federal agencies are doing enough to protect the safety of blue-collar temporary workers.

Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) commissioned the probe by the General Accounting Office, the investigative agency of the US Congress.

Gutierrez is asking the General Accounting Office to examine whether the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration should hold temp agencies directly responsible for safety conditions at customers' job sites and require temp firms to inspect these sites prior to dispatching workers.

The Building and Construction Trades Department has asked that the GAO examine why temp workers in construction suffer injuries far exceeding the industry average. For example, workers at the country's largest blue-collar temp firm, Labor Ready, suffer an injury rate of 25.7 per 100 workers, which is more than three times the construction injury average.

The Building and Construction Trades Department also asked the probe to examine the causes of recent vehicle crashes that have killed or injured temp workers being transported to jobsites, and whether federal transportation officials can do more to prevent such crashes.

On June 18, an overloaded van carrying temp workers from a Delaware plant crashed on its return to Lam Staffing Inc. in Philadelphia, killing five workers.

On July 19, another van crashed in the Chicago suburbs, injuring all 19 temp workers who were crammed into a seven-passenger van. The driver was unlicensed. The van, commissioned by Milwaukee-based StaffWorks Staffing Services, was also uninsured and carried a fraudulent registration. p