



## WORK SAFELY ON PIPELINES

Laborers are busy on pipelines across New York, supporting oil and natural gas distribution. New York State LECET and New York State Organizing Fund have been attending FERC pipeline hearings in various locations around the state in an effort to win new jobs for our locals. As this work progresses we should as an organization be prepared to put our skilled workers on the job.

These projects provide both long-term work opportunities and serious hazards to Laborers. Our role in pipeline projects is primarily in digging trenches and laying pipe – important work that may expose our members to trench collapses that can cause serious injuries and fatalities.

U.S. Department of Transportation research found that 25 percent of incidents on pipeline sites are related to excavation, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that cave ins cause three quarters of trench-related fatalities.

Certain jobsite conditions increase these hazards including rain, cracks in the trench wall or the type of soil present. More than a third of trench-related fatalities occur on Mondays, likely caused by rain or other changing conditions over the weekend.

Common jobsite activity that can magnify cave-in hazards include:

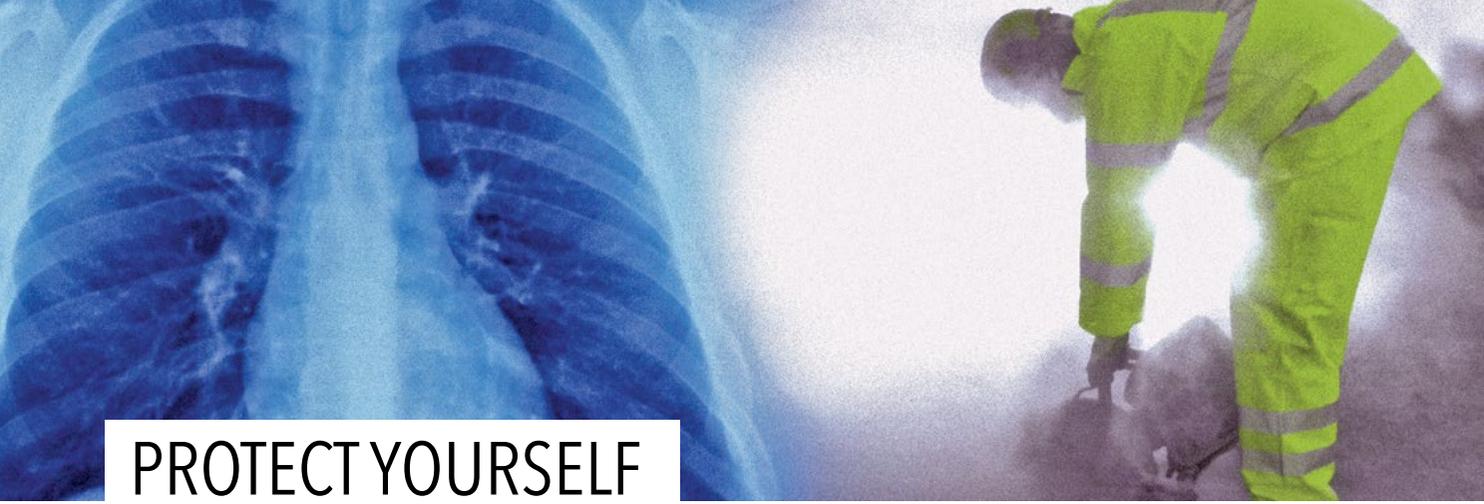
- External loads from construction equipment near the edge of the trench
- Piling soil too close to the edge of the trench

- Trench walls cut too steeply for the type of soil present, and
- Pressure from moisture in the soil during winter and early spring

Crews can prevent fatalities from cave-ins and collapses by taking proper protections to reduce the pressure from surrounding soil on the walls of the trench:

- Sloping, the most common protection, involves cutting back trench walls away from the excavation. This removes weight from the trench walls and helps alleviate downward pressure on the soil. However, this protection may not be available in tight confines with no room to widen the trench.
- Benching, a form of sloping, involves excavating trench walls in horizontal steps, usually with near-vertical surfaces between levels. Some soils won't support benching.
- Shoring requires installing vertical supports along trench walls to prevent cave-ins.
- Shielding protects workers with trench boxes or other supports when sloping and shoring can't be used. Trench boxes don't reduce pressure on the walls of the trench, they block it; so workers must stay inside them for protection.

The likelihood of pipeline work increasing in the next several years is strong, so Laborers should remain aware of the hazards and protective measures.



# PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST SILICA

**// Our Union members are exposed to silica in a variety of types of construction work,**

testified Jim Melius, MD, DrPH, Administrator of New York State's Laborers Health and Safety Trust Fund at hearings on rule-making at the U.S. Department of Labor to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). "As a result, they have an increased risk of developing silicosis, cancer and other illnesses."

Silica occurs in soil, sand, granite and many other minerals. Laborers can be exposed during common construction operations such as: Using masonry saws; using hand-operated grinders; tuckpointing; using jackhammers; using rotary hammers or drills; operating vehicle-mounted drilling rigs; milling; rock crushing; drywall finishing using silica-containing material; and use of heavy equipment during earthmoving.

Breathing silica dust can cause silicosis, a potentially disabling or fatal lung disease; and increases the risk of lung cancer. These diseases may not appear until five to 20 years after exposure.

New OSHA standards will not be completed for at least two years so in the meantime take the following precautions. We endorse the following OSHA's recommendations:

- Replace crystalline silica materials with safer substitutes, where possible
- Provide exhaust ventilation, blasting cabinets and water sprays to control dust exposure
- Wear appropriate respirators if silica dust is not being controlled

- Take advantage of training, exposure monitoring, screening and surveillance programs to monitor exposure and effects
- Remember that smoking worsens lung problems and increase risk of cancer related to silica exposure

**Take these important steps to protect your health!**

**OSHA QUICK CARD™**

### Protect Yourself Silicosis

Silicosis is caused by exposure to respirable crystalline silica dust. Crystalline silica is a basic component of soil, sand, granite, and most other types of rock, and it is used as an abrasive blasting agent. Silicosis is a progressive, disabling, and often fatal lung disease. Cigarette smoking adds to the lung damage caused by silica.

#### Effects of Silicosis

- Lung cancer – Silica has been classified as a human lung carcinogen.
- Bronchitis/Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder.
- Tuberculosis – Silicosis makes an individual more susceptible to TB.
- Scleroderma – a disease affecting skin, blood vessels, joints and skeletal muscles.
- Possible renal disease.

#### Symptoms of Silicosis

- Shortness of breath; possible fever.
- Fatigue; loss of appetite.
- Chest pain; dry, nonproductive cough.
- Respiratory failure, which may eventually lead to death.

#### Sources of Exposure

- Sandblasting for surface preparation.
- Crushing and drilling rock and concrete.
- Masonry and concrete work (e.g., building and road construction and repair).
- Mining/tunneling; demolition work.
- Cement and asphalt pavement manufacturing.

#### Preventing Silicosis

- Use all available engineering controls such as blasting cabinets and local exhaust ventilation. Avoid using compressed air for cleaning surfaces.
- Use water sprays, wet methods for cutting, chipping, drilling, sawing, grinding, etc.
- Substitute non-crystalline silica blasting material.
- Use respirators approved for protection against silica; if sandblasting, use abrasive blasting respirators.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke near crystalline silica dust.
- Wash hands and face before eating, drinking or smoking away from exposure area.



# DON'T DRIVE DROWSY



## We all know the hazards of driving while intoxicated, while phoning or texting. Driving drowsy is also dangerous.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that 100,000 police-reported crashes annually are caused by drowsy drivers. These crashes kill an estimated 1,550 people, cause 71,000 injuries and cost \$12.5 billion.

The toll may actually be even higher. Unlike DWI which can be detected by breathalyzer or blood tests, there's no test for driving while drowsy. Police departments don't always train officers in recognizing drowsy driving, or use consistent codes in reporting it. In Australia and some European countries that have more consistent reporting than here, drowsy driving causes ten to 30 percent of crashes.

Shift workers are more likely than daytime workers to drive to work drowsy at least a few days a month: 36 percent versus 25 percent, respectively.

Australian researchers found that being awake for 18 hours produced the same impairment as a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .05 percent, and .10 after 24 hours

awake. In New York State, .08 BAC is considered legally drunk.

Laborers doing shift work or driving long distances to and from job sites face a heightened risk of drowsy driving.

However, readily available remedies can reduce that risk and help you stay alert:

- Sleep - Get plenty of sleep before a long trip.
- Breaks and naps - schedule a break at least once every two hours, and whenever you begin to feel sleepy.
- Food and drink - Eat sensibly, but avoid large meals. They can make you drowsy, particularly at lunchtime.
- Getting fresh air - You'll find it easier to stay alert if you have fresh air blowing into your vehicle.
- Share the driving - If possible, share the driving.
- Medications - Avoid taking medications, both prescribed and over-the-counter, that lead to drowsiness.

**Most importantly, get enough sleep: eight hours is best.**





# DO BRIDGE WORK SAFELY

Laborers are working on bridges across the state, building or repairing bridges that carry millions of vehicles every day, including the Tappan Zee Bridge over the lower Hudson at Nyack and the Patroon Island Bridge 100 miles upstream near Albany.

Laborers on bridge projects face significant safety hazards from falls, from equipment and materials falling from overhead, and from passing traffic. For example, last year, 406 traffic crashes in construction zones on New York bridges and roads killed four and injured 259 people.

Guardrails, personal fall-protection (personal fall-arrest systems, guardrails, safety nets), material-specific protections for asphalt and concrete work, head, eyes and skin protection are all vitally important in bridge work.

## Key Safety Practices to Avoid Falls:

- Limit access/set up controlled access zones
- Use fall protection systems: guardrails, safety nets, or fall arrest systems
- Cover or guard holes and openings as soon as they are created. Covers must support two times the weight (body, equipment, materials) that may be imposed

## Key Work Zone Safety Practices:

- Use flaggers, traffic cones, and/or highway channeling devices to steer traffic away from response and recovery workers along the roadway
- Use flaggers, standard road signs (e.g., “work zone ahead”), or message boards to warn approaching vehicles of work area
- Use channelizing devices (barriers) to delineate the travel path, to mark the locations of the hazards and to separate opposing or adjacent travel lanes, and to separate traffic and pedestrians
- Give motorists plenty of warning of upcoming work zones
- Ensure that the work zone is well lit, but control glare to avoid temporarily blinding response and recovery workers or passing motorists

Remember that your union safety training and insistence on strict safety standards provide vital safeguards. In 2012, for example, 72 percent of construction fatalities across the state were at nonunion job sites.

Use proper precautions and equipment to work safely on bridges.



Laborsafe is a publication of the NYS Laborers' Health & Safety Trust Fund.  
[www.nysliuna.org](http://www.nysliuna.org)

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