

# Health and Safety in the Construction Industry in Catanduanes, Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

The Island Province of Catanduanes is gaining grounds in the field of construction. The program of the current administration “Build, Build, Build” have taken the construction industry to full blast. Construction, both private and public are evident on every corners of the island. Occupational Safety and Health in construction is often neglected and disregarded. Construction is the one of the most dangerous sectors in health and safety. The government, thru the Department of Labor and Employment had already address the problem by providing safety and health training to the personnel of the construction firm as well as the industry as a whole. But the effort has been far from satisfactory, as construction accident continue to dominate the entire industry. The study aims to awareness of construction safety in Catanduanes. The study focuses on the awareness of workers in construction industry in Catanduanes on Occupational Safety and Health. From the series of interviews and interaction with the workers on site, and upon evaluation of their responses, the researcher finally come up with the conclusion that, the construction workers are aware of the safety and health in constructions but they do not adhere and follow it. Workers admittedly that the reason they are complaisant about following safety and health practices are discomfort, beliefs, and bad habits. The following recommendation were sought based on the results of the interview; 1. Workers must attend or be trained with safety and health. A training that would enable them to understand the safety and health issues and concerns, 2. Workers must be taught with correct attitude towards safety in workplace, 3. They must taught of right things contrary to their old beliefs, 4. Workers must developed good habit and positive outlook in terms of their safety and well-being.

**Keywords--** Construction Safety, Occupational Safety and Health, Construction Industry, Construction Workers

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Island Province of Catanduanes is gaining grounds in the field of construction. The program of the current administration “Build, Build, Build” have taken the construction industry to full blast. Construction, both private and public are evident on every corners of the island. Occupational Safety and Health in construction is often neglected and disregarded. Construction is the one of the most dangerous sector in health and safety. The

government, thru the Department of Labor and Employment had already address the problem by providing safety and health training to the personnel of the construction firm as well as the industry as a whole. But the effort has been far from satisfactory, as construction accident continue to dominate the entire industry. Despite the programs implemented by the government, thru its attached agency, and also measure made by the construction firms, the number of construction accidents is still high. And in 2018, the Republic Act No. 11058 entitled "An Act Strengthening Compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Standards and Providing Penalties for Violations thereof" was signed into law by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte on August 17, 2018, while the IRR was approved and signed by Secretary Silvestre H. Bello III on December 6, 2018. The declaration of policy of the RA 11058 clearly states that; 1. Labor as a primary social and economic force, Safe and healthy workforce is an integral aspect of nation building, 2. Ensure a safe and healthful workforce for all working people. 3. Full protection against hazards, 4. Provision of the Labor Code of the Philippines, 5. All laws, and internationally-recognized standards on OSH are being fully enforced and complied with, 6. Protect every worker against injury, sickness or death, and 7. Strict but dynamic, inclusive, and gender sensitive measures”,

Health and safety issues have always been a major problem and concern in the construction industry. Wherever reliable records are available, construction is found to have a higher risk on health and safety, particularly in developing countries. While Catanduanes is enjoying the progress brought by the development through infrastructure, it is sad to note that construction projects are not implemented safely over these years. Construction Industry is still the one of the most dangerous land-based work sectors in the country. Fatal accidents such as falls from height, accidents involving construction equipment, electrocution, and being hit by objects are the common causes of accidents in the construction industry (PSA, 2017).

This study focuses on the actual implementation of Safety Standards required in the construction working site. The area of focus is the capital town of Catanduanes, the municipality of Virac where construction is everywhere. This study aims to assess and evaluate the workers with regards to their

awareness on safety and health in construction and to institute the implementation of the safety standards of the contractors or the owners. The input presents the Goals and Objective of RA 11058, Occupational Safety Manual, and OSH Legislation. In the input is the data gathered for the study. The process on the other hand includes the data gathering procedures, interview, library research, interpretation of data, and personal observation. For the output, it presents the recommendation and the strategies in the plan for further implementation of the amended OSH law specifically in Construction Industry. It also includes the feedback that shows further planning and analysis must be done during the process.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative method of research through a structured survey interview and stimulus material for a safe environment at the worksite (Willbourn, 2009). The interview were conducted to construction workers, which included: laborers, carpenters, masons, electricians, foremen, engineers and managers. In order to address the first objective, respondents were visited on the actual construction sites and data were collected through the interview. As to the second objective, the findings and results can help the researcher to draw potential recommendations to promote the safety standard practices in actual implementation of the project site. The interview questions are structured to obtained information through investigation using native and Bicol dialect. The interview guide is also sequence to probe issues and problems in the construction site. The interview lasted for approximately 1 hour. Interview were recorded. Stimulus picture was also given to the respondent to ask for their opinion that that specific matter. The interview was guided by the Interview Guide (in local dialect) which was made up to ensure objectives were addressed. The sequence of topics varied with each interview as the researcher utilized the respondent's answers to progress the conversation.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Respondent's Projects

Respondents were working on a wide range of construction projects. The most common projects for urban areas are vertical constructions and horizontal construction for rural areas. Horizontal constructions include, roads, canal, bridges, slope protections. These projects are undertaken by the government through its attached agencies, the DPWH, PEO, and LGU-MEO. Vertical constructions on the other hand were mostly privately owned, and some are government funded projects in the CSU campus.

### Worker group

Workers on the site typically are from same group and sub-contractors, over and over again.

*"Magkairibahanna kami samaskisainnastestino. Magpadina kami uya Gabos. Sarong Pamilyana Kami Uya."*

*("We have been together in wherever destination; we are all friends. We are one family")*

Respondents valued the relationships and support which they had built up with their team and co-workers. Many laborers were employed on a daily wage basis. Respondents have no contract with the employers. They work on per job basis.

*"Bilang sarong grupo, midbid mi ang lambing saro, isimo ang kakayahanning lambing saro, kaya pagabotsatrabaho, isi mi kongpapanomagigingmadari ang gibuhon ta gaturuwangan kami. Mas madari ang trabaho, mas maogma ang samuyang mga Boss. Mas dakula ang tsansana may masunod pa natrabahopagkataposuya, sabidaangani, everybody's happy."*

*("Being in one group, we know each and every one, we know each capability in every aspect of works, so we know how to make our work easy. We work easily and our Boss is happier. We have a big chance of being employed after this (project). As they say everybody's happy."*

### Safety on Site

Most respondents stated that safety on site was a very important. The elements of safety were, organized site, common sense and appropriate protection, clothing and shoes. A few respondent hesitate or not even aware of the safety in the site.

*"Kami kamiuya ang ga-alalaysa lambing saro, pigareparo ang lambing saro para daimapeligro ang mgatawo. May tiwalaakosainda ta awatnakaminggairibahan."*

*("We support each other, we care for each and every one so as not to put them in danger. I trust them because we have been together for too long.")*

On a rare occasions when new workers or sub-contractors are used to reinforce the manpower, generally the new comer will have to adopt to the existing organizational structure, unless otherwise they are on a separate and independent installer of sub-project. There is a mistrust between the different group in the site that creates different atmosphere.

*"Pag may ibanggruposa site, nagkakaigua ng pakiramdaman ang mgatawo. Pag di mi midbid, syempre, ingat kami sasamuyang safety. Baadamongan kami."*

*("If there were new group in the site, workers are hesitant. We don't know them and that we are careful that they might harm us")*

### Risk Perceptions

#### Accidents

All respondents were aware that construction sites have many hazards. However, they believe

accidents are not caused by hazards, rather caused by immaturity and bad luck. They believe that people make mistakes and occasionally things breaks. They even told us the story of recent accidents involving co-workers, and more stories of accident they have seen.

*"Yong sarong kaibahan mi, kapinatal. Bako man syang operator kan circular saw, pinakialaman. Ngoniankinaon so jacket nya kaya patikamotnya, niladasning blade. Mayadngani ta nabuhaysya.."*

*"Daebatiid, nag oro-asta man pagdiwidiw."*

*"Dumansapigahukayming foundation, nag collapse, natabunan so sarong kongkaiba, mayadngani ta naagapan."*

*"(one of our co-worker, stupid. He knows that he is not an operator, he meddled the circular saw, now, his jacket was hit by the blade including his hands. It's good he is still alive."*

*"He is not knowledgeable yet he meddled."*

*"at the foundation excavation, it collapsed, one of our co-worker was covered (with soil), good it was noticed earlier."*

#### **Attitudes and Beliefs**

Workers believed that their own attitudes to risk and safety are based on the experience they have in the field. They have different perception and behavior for a given situation in the field. Their action is founded of what they believed and how they manage their action to towards risk actions.

*"Kungorasmona, orasmona!"*

*"Buwisbuhay ang trabaho, peroinisanapaagi para mabuhay"*

*"(if it is your time, it will be your time"*

*"Work is life threatening, but this is our way to live life")"*

Based on the attitude, there is no clear line in the term wrong and Right in Health and Safety. They recognized Safe and Unsafe act but still they distort the meaning of safe and unsafe just to justify their beliefs.

#### **Safety and Compliance**

##### **Unsafe and non-compliant**

*"Napapagodnaako, perokailanganmataposito, ditto naakodadaan, tatalonna lang akokaysaiikotpaako."*

*"(I was tired, but need to finish it (work), I will use this as passage, I will jump rather than turning around.)"*

##### **Unsafe and compliant**

*"Pag-gagamit ng helmet, google, gloves, buda safety shoes. . . mainitsaginhawa, masakitmaghiwas, abala."*

*"(Using helmet, google, gloves, and safety shoes.."*

*Warm in the body, not easy to move ..hassle..")"*

##### **Safe and non-compliant**

*"Ang samuyangtungtungan, gibosakawayan, gakotning wire, kaya ingat kami sapaglakawsatungtungan ta baadmatumba."*

*"(Our scaffold was made of bamboo, tied with wire, we have to be very careful with our steps because it might fall down.)"*

##### **Safe and compliant**

*"Pirmiakonggagamit ng safety belt and harness pagasakatninghalangkaw...masakitnabaadmadalusay."*

*"Pirming maligning uyasa site budamaayosmgagamit ta baadmasilaboyako o matunokningmgapako."*

*"(I always use safety belt and harness on high areas, it's hard, I might slip."*

*"We maintain cleanliness in the site, maintained order of things because we might slip on it or stepped on nails")"*

##### **Health and Safety Attitudes**

Workers are aligned to the word safety, the importance of safety, but no emphasis on Health. Worker used safety only but not health. They are aware for the benefits of health and safety protocols, but a lot of irritation and hesitation where they are believed to be un-necessary or impractical. "

##### **Barriers to Adaptation of Good Health and Safety Practices**

The respondents are aware of the safety and health in constructions but they do not earnestly follow it. Workers admittedly that the reason they are complaisant about following safety and health practice:

##### **Beliefs**

*"Kung orasmona, orasmona"*

*"(When it's your time, it's your time")"*

##### **Habits**

*"Awatnaakouyasatrabahongini, aram ko napasikot-sikotkaini"*

*"(I've been working here for so long. I already know how it is being done")"*

##### **Discomfort**

*"Mainitsaginhawa ang gagamit ng gloves, helmet, and googles, bako man kitang ma drive motor."*

*Mapagal mag sol-ot ng bakalnasapatossabitis, magabat"*

*"Abala ang safety harness, na an, gaingat man ako."*

*"(Warn in the body if we use gloves, helmet and googles, we are not driving motors"*

*"It was tiring to use safety shoes, heavy .."*

*"Hassle to use safety harness, it was heavy..")"*

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

From the series of interviews and interaction with the workers on site, and upon evaluation of their responses, the researcher finally come up with the conclusion that, the construction workers are aware of the safety and health in constructions but they do not adhere and follow it. Workers admittedly that the reason they are complaisant about following safety and health practices are discomfort, beliefs, and bad habits.

## RECOMMENDATION

From the results of the study, it is found out that workers must attend or be trained with safety and health. A training that would enable them to understand the safety and health issues and concerns. Workers must be taught with correct attitude towards safety in workplace. They must teach of right things contrary to their old beliefs. In addition, workers must develop good habit and positive outlook in terms of their safety and well-being. Government regulators and the Owner must adhere the amended OSH Law 2019 also known as RA 11058.

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