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Health and Safety Issues Among Older Construction Workers: A Pilot Study

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Abstract: The objective of this pilot study was to get a sense of what the current health status is of the construction workforce and determine if safety professionals in the field are aware of the issues at hand and what can be done to manage the health & safety issues. In order to gauge what safety professionals knew about the situation and to get an idea as to what their organizations were doing, they were asked to fill out a two page survey. The survey participants represented over 12,000 employees and companies that have been in business for an average of 74 years. All of these companies had a written safety program that on average has been in place for 20 years. The findings suggested that safety professionals are in fact well aware of the health issues that the aging construction workforce is facing. The survey also revealed that there is an overwhelming agreement that older workers are still very valuable to the industry. Health and Wellness programs have proven to be rather effective and only about 50% of the companies represented in the survey had such programs in place. In addition to that, more than 60% of the respondents reported that they would be in favor of a program that maximized an “older workers” potential. With the collaboration of all the parties involved, the industry should be able to develop creative and effective health & safety programs that any size organization can use, with the ultimate goal being to have a healthier workforce in the construction industry.

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