

# BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!



THE QUARTERLY SAFETY BULLETIN OF THE INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION, AFL-CIO

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## CARING ABOUT FELLOW ILA BROTHERS & SISTERS THAT MAY NEED OUR HELP

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### Here's How To Make A Difference

#### The Problem

ILA Members share a lot in common with virtually every segment of society. Some of those commonalities are good; some not so good. That's just the way it is. One such commonality that's not so good, is that of substance abuse. A comparatively small part of society finds it difficult to keep away from the habitual use of illegal drugs and/or alcohol. It's no surprise then, that a comparatively small number of ILA Members will suffer from the same type of problem that effects all of society.

That problem, fellow brothers & sisters, is not a disgrace; it's not an embarrassment; it's not some sort of a shameful characterization that brands any of our Members as being somehow weak or substandard: It's simply a matter of being human and being ill. The good news: Those afflicted can get well, and we all can help in that process. That's what brothers and sisters are supposed to do, right? Help each other. It's time we had some more of that.

#### Accidents We Investigate

As many of you know, the ILA-USMX Joint Safety Committee (JSC) conducts accident investigations of the more high-profile accidents that occur within the ILA-USMX jurisdiction. When a high profile accident occurs outside of that jurisdiction, ILA Safety Representatives will conduct their own, independent investigation. Our Safety Representatives have been trained (and continue to be trained) in the latest accident investigation techniques, and their investigative work has prompted many changes in the manner that our membership's work is conducted in a safe and healthful way. We've been doing that for several years now.

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Very infrequently (and we want to greatly stress and emphasize the term “infrequently”) during the course of our accident investigations, we come upon circumstances that suggest one of two things:

- 1). The facts appear to provide an indication (but not conclusively prove) that drug or alcohol use was a factor in the accident’s occurrence; or (even more infrequently)
- 2). The facts clearly show that drug or alcohol use was a factor in the accident’s occurrence.

Underlying our concerns, is that the on the job lives of all our brothers and sisters are put at substantial risk by those Members who are afflicted. Indeed, they most often put their very own lives at risk. It is unacceptable, however, for any of us to stay silent in the face of life-threatening risks that may be presented to all (or even one) of us. The real question that remains, is how ***not*** to be silent.

## **Being A Caring Brother (Or Sister)**

When my biological brother is ill, I don’t have the slightest hesitation in taking any and all steps necessary in order to make him well. I’ll drive him to the doctor’s office; pick up his prescriptions; ensure that he takes his medicine; says his prayers and follows the doctor’s instructions. That reasonable, brotherly response holds true for any illness: from pneumonia to substance abuse. Permitting my brother to ignore his illness, is much like inviting him to allow that illness to progress. If the progression of an illness is not stopped..... the patient does not get well: the patient dies.

If any of us permits another brother or sister ILA member’s substance abuse-related illness to progress, the same thing will inevitably occur: the patient will die. And when that illness is permitted to present itself on the job; within an industrial setting known for its unforgiving ability to claim lives through workplace accidents, even worse things can happen: other ILA brothers and sisters can be hurt or killed.

Through a sort of informed silence, we, as workers, run the risk of being accountable (even if only to ourselves) for passively ignoring the obvious and allowing a fellow ILA member’s illness to; in the final analysis, injure or kill himself/herself and possibly others. That should be completely unacceptable to each one of us.

**ILA BROTHERS AND SISTERS WATCH EACH OTHER’S BACK FOR SAFETY; FOR EVERYTHING.....**

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## **Let Our Labor Contracts Do The Heavy Lifting**

Our collective bargaining agreements include provisions that fully and fairly address (without blame or prejudice) on-the-job drug and alcohol use. Moreover, those same collective bargaining agreements also include comprehensive health coverage for the treatment of substance abuse-related illnesses. Finally, one of ILA's International Safety Representatives (Mr. George Lynch) is a licensed and certified substance abuse counsellor. He has helped many ILA members (and their families) get back their lives and their health. Indeed, the ILA has all it needs to keep these very personal matters in-house, well-contained, confidential and successfully treated.

## **Doing The Right Thing**

That's why this quarter's **BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!** suggests that brothers and sisters suffering with an obvious substance abuse problem should be able to count on all of us for help when they need it. Ignoring their illness also ignores their well-being, the well-being of their families and also, very importantly, that of all ILA brothers and sisters who happen to share their workplace.

Being in touch with an ILA Safety Representative ensures the utmost in confidentiality and allows the internal process to do what it does best: **to help**. Denying that help to a brother or sister ILA member makes no sense and serves absolutely no purpose.

## **Need To Be In Touch With An ILA Safety Representative?**

ILA members needing advice, assistance or guidance in considering occupational safety related circumstances and/or issues, should keep in mind that your Union's Safety Representatives are available to consult with.

Mr. George Lynch Tel: 917.797.5812 email: [glynch@nysailafunds.net](mailto:glynch@nysailafunds.net)  
[Located at NY/NJ]

Mr. Bennie Bryan Tel: 912.312.4573 email: [bbryan1414@yahoo.com](mailto:bbryan1414@yahoo.com)  
[Located at Savannah, GA]

Mr. Bob Fiore Tel: 305.798.5845 email: [ilabobby@bellsouth.net](mailto:ilabobby@bellsouth.net)  
[Located at Miami, FL]

**Whenever a serious accident occurs, or when a hazardous situation requiring a higher level of technical attention or advice is apparent, please be in touch with your Safety Representatives. Your information is valuable, could save a life and may otherwise remain unknown.**

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