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CONTACT:
John Peterson
919-541-7860

NIEHS Awards $37 Million to Train Emergency and Hazardous Waste Workers

More than $37 million will go to workers involved in emergency response and hazardous waste clean-up from awards just made by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), one of the National Institutes of Health. The grants will provide training designed to protect workers and their communities from exposure to toxic materials encountered during hazardous waste operations and chemical emergency response.

“There is no better way to protect the health and safety of workers who are involved in our nation’s emergency response and hazardous waste clean-up efforts than to provide them with the proper training and education,” said NIEHS Director David A. Schwartz, M.D. “These awards will provide workers with the skills and knowledge they need to protect themselves, their communities, and our environment from exposure to hazardous materials.”

Some of these awards are granted under the newly created Hazmat Disaster Preparedness Training Program. The new program was developed in the aftermath of the World Trade Center Disaster, and is the result of the lessons learned by NIEHS-funded workers who participated in the subsequent clean-up of the affected area. These new awards will fund five training programs:

- The Hazmat Disaster Preparedness Training Program will fund the development of programs that will train workers in prevention and response techniques related to future terrorist incidents.
- The Hazardous Waste Worker Training Program will provide occupational safety and health training for workers who are involved in hazardous waste removal or containment, or chemical emergency response.
- The Department of Energy Nuclear Weapons Cleanup Training Program is targeted for workers engaged in environmental restoration, waste treatment...
The Minority Worker Training Program will deliver comprehensive training for disadvantaged urban youth who are preparing for employment in the environmental restoration and hazardous materials fields.

The Brownfield Minority Worker Training Program will provide comprehensive training and economic and environmental restoration to disadvantaged residents impacted by brownfields.

The grants will be administered by the NIEHS Worker Education and Training Program (WETP). “In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the importance of funding and supporting hazmat disaster preparedness training has never been clearer,” said Chip Hughes, director of the WETP.

The following is a list of organizations that received grant awards for worker training programs:

- Laborers/Associated General Contractors Training Fund ($6.5 million)
- Center to Protect Workers’ Rights ($5.7 million)
- Steelworker Charitable and Education Organization ($3.4 million)
- International Chemical Workers Union Council ($2.9 million)
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters/National Labor College ($2.5 million)
- International Union of Operating Engineers ($2.5 million)
- University of Medicine/Dentistry of New Jersey ($2.1 million)
- Office of Applied Innovations, Inc. ($1.9 million)
- International Association of Fire Fighters ($1.6 million)
- Midwest Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training ($1.4 million)
- University of California at Los Angeles ($1.4 million)
- Dillard University Deep South Center for Environmental Justice ($1.1 million)
- Kirkwood Community College Consortium for Safety Training ($1.1 million)
- University of Massachusetts at Lowell ($1.1 million)
- United Auto Workers of America ($735 thousand)
- American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees ($625 thousand)
- University of Alabama at Birmingham ($538 thousand)
- Service Employees International Union Education/Support Fund ($508 thousand)