

**Testimony of Mike Kallmeyer
Before the
House Committee on Education and Labor
June 24, 2008**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, distinguished Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Mike Kallmeyer, and I am the Senior VP for Construction at Denier Electric, in Columbus, Ohio. I have almost 30 years of experience in the electrical contracting field.

I am pleased that the Committee has decided to examine a subject that is of the utmost importance; workplace safety. Jobsite safety is one of the key components of any successful contractor's business model. A safe jobsite is essential for maintaining employee morale and performance, and thus increases the contractor's ability to run a profitable business.

Our goal is always to prevent accidents, rather than simply reacting to them after the fact. I am hopeful that today's hearing will serve to convince the Committee that the best way to improve workplace safety is by continually working to prevent jobsite accidents. Bad actors who neglect safety rules and put their employees at risk should be punished to the fullest extent of the law. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the vast majority of employers care about their employees' safety and strive to run clean jobsites that are safe and efficient. By working cooperatively to educate employers about the necessary workplace safety techniques and procedures, agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) can help continue the overall decrease in jobsite accidents that we have witnessed over the past several years.

At Denier Electric, workplace safety is part of our culture because it is the right thing to do for our employees and for our business. Make no mistake about it, being an electrician can be a hazardous way to earn a living. I can tell you, from personal experience, that our workplace safety practices and techniques are dramatically improved from 20 years ago, and that they are continually evolving to meet the high expectations that we set for ourselves.

That is why Denier encourages and practices workplace safety techniques through its own training and education programs, as well as the resources of our trade association, the Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC).

Safety on the jobsite must be part of everything we do as a business, it must be part of Denier Electric's culture, if we want to be effective. To put this in context, I believe it will be beneficial if I give you real world examples of how Denier makes safety part of everything that our employees do.

First, all of our employees receive training in what we call "safety indoctrination" before they ever set foot on one of our jobsites. Our electrical apprentices receive OSHA training as part of their educational program. Additionally, there is OSHA 30 hour training for all Denier Electric employees. Along with that, each Denier Electric employee completes all of the industry recognized safety courses required for their

field of employment. Denier Electric also offers a Drug Free Workplace Program, and offers rehabilitation assistance for anyone in need.

On every one of our jobsites, each day begins with a “pre-shift huddle” where management and employees perform a hazard analysis of that particular jobsite. Denier’s safety director also conducts site-specific training for each job, and Denier employees are provided with the necessary personal protective equipment for every job. Along with that, we initiate a daily “frequent regular inspection” of each jobsite, conducted by management and an employee representative.

Denier performs incident investigations, should an accident or a “near miss” occur. These investigations are conducted by a team composed of management, employees, and an outside safety consultant.

Secondly, we utilize employee incentive programs to continually improve the safety of our company. I understand that some are critical of incentive programs, but I have seen firsthand that a properly run incentive program produces tangible results.

Our incentive program rewards individuals with good safety records, individuals who exceed our own training requirements, and individuals who volunteer to serve on our safety committee. In order to ensure that this program is truly effective, Denier’s incentive program is reviewed annually by a committee of employees, management, and an outside safety consultant.

A safe jobsite is a productive jobsite, and, as you can see, at Denier we take our safety programs very seriously and do everything we can to make our workplace safe.

As I mentioned earlier, Denier belongs to IEC, which is an organization that is very active in promoting and educating its members about jobsite safety. IEC provides its members and their employees with numerous tools and resources to improve their work sites.

A key to making progress with jobsite safety is continually educating contractors. Often times, employers may be unaware of the latest changes to safety regulations. OSHA’s cooperative programs, with organizations such as IEC, serve as a valuable conduit for ensuring that the busy contractor is kept up to speed on the latest regulations and workplace practices.

One of the keys to IEC’s safety program is its Alliance program with OSHA. As part of IEC’s agreement with OSHA, IEC commits to educating its members about OSHA regulations as well as relaying the best industry practices that are being promoted by OSHA.

At the same time, IEC can assist OSHA in ensuring that its guidance and regulations are effective and realistic. The Internet has allowed so much more information to be available to business owners, large and small. OSHA and IEC are using this resource to better educate contractors about the value of jobsite safety, as well as providing contractors with the resources to make safe jobsites a reality. IEC, as part of its Alliance program with OSHA, works with OSHA officials to produce informational pieces and articles---such as “e-Tools”--- that are available through OSHA’s web site, as well as IEC’s.

An excellent example of this partnership is IEC's *Jobsite Safety Handbook*, which was produced in cooperation with OSHA. The idea behind this *Handbook* is to provide contractors with a pocket-sized guide for their supervisors and employees in order to provide on-site guidance for the often complex problems that electricians can face every day.

Since its production last year, IEC has distributed more than 25,000 copies of this guidebook to its contractor members, and more are being printed in order to meet the continued demand for this useful resource.

I am proud that Denier Electric is currently beginning the application process to participate in OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP). VPP is yet another example of OSHA working with industry to continually improve the workplace through cooperation and recognition of the best practices.

If I may conclude with a point that I made at the beginning of my testimony, I believe that the most effective action for government is to aggressively promote its educational partnerships with the industry so that more employers have the resources to improve their workplace.

By working together, industry and government can provide employers with the educational resources they need to prevent accidents before they happen.

Programs such as OSHA's alliances are effective and will continue to be so with the proper support from Congress.

I would like to again thank the Committee for this opportunity, and I encourage you to work with your constituents----both employers and employees----to cooperatively improve jobsite safety.