

WE'RE JUST AVERAGE STEELWORKERS

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Valerie Cale - We have no prepared statements. We find that this seminar is very academic and way out of our line. We're just average steelworkers with average education. We see all these slides and monitoring of these dummies and we just feel that you ought to be out in the workplace monitoring them dummies in the steel mill. It was pretty hard for me to understand all the technical stuff that you guys are knowledgeable about. It's pretty obvious to me that you guys and woman have a lot of interest in what's going on as far as respirators. I think it's obvious to you that there's more problems with respirators in so far as fitting of the face, and things like that. I think that you really can't go into an air-conditioned laboratory and monitor and make specifications as to what we should be wearing or what we should be doing. You have to be out in our work area in the same atmosphere and environment that we're in, in order to understand. In my job, I work in production and the more you produce the more money you make. I'm not concerned about my health. When I go in there I'm concerned about coming home to my children the same way I went in there. You're wearing a hard hat and goggles, respirator, a long-sleeved shirt, long heavy pants, metatarsal shoes and gloves, in my job which is extremely hot; it's somewhere around 137 degrees. We don't work 8 hours a day and the reason we don't is some of the situations we get into, such as I have to wear long Johns all year around in order to stop my skin from being burned up. Occasionally it burns anyway. It's pretty hard to tell a man who's shoveling all day long. Sometimes you shovel 7 hours out of 8. Sometimes you only do it for 2 hours. It depends upon where your boss is at. It gets extremely warm. It's heavy, you're hot, you're over equipped in our opinion. We'd love to work in air conditioning, but it's impossible. We have to roll steel. It's not a powder puff factory and we do heavy work, believe me. You can sit here and say that the labor force will not wear the equipment that's designed for them. That's not true. You never see a welder without his lid down when he's welding. And you never see a scarfer without his monogoggles on. And if it was properly fit, we would all wear respirators. I don't like the idea. I have asthma which I've gotten the last 5 years that I've been working in a steel mill. I have an industrial hearing loss, so if you want to say something you will have to speak up loud. As I said, I have two little girls and I want to walk out of there the same way I walked in. U.S. Steel is not going to go home and feed my children when I'm laid up with an asthma attack or stuck to a respirator in my bed. They don't care. The Federal government says that we have the right under the constitution of this land to have a safe job environment. We don't. And all the doctors and all the scientists and all of management and all the money in the world doesn't replace what has happened to us. If we had trust in the design in a respirator, we'd be more than glad to wear it. As I've said, we have families, we have people that care about us and people that we care about, that we have to take care of. We want to make our money and get out of there in one piece. And a lot of times the Boss will tell you to go in and do a job, we don't feel it's safe but you're pushed into doing it. So you go in there and get out as soon as you can. And I think of the problem with the respirators not fitting the face. It's impossible to put a respirator on the working person when they're perspiring and have a proper fit. We've discussed a lot of things and I've talked to a few of my friends in the bar and they said why can't they insert something into the nose, instead of having the mask that fits halfway over your face. They say it's

impossible. I don't think it is. I think what we're subject to in the labor force is the cost of money. Everybody's concerned about economics. I think that money isn't of any value to me. If I make it I spend it. And that's the way it should be. That's why I made it, to spend it. I don't know how it is in other countries but our government will spend millions of dollars to find out why you use your right hand and are not left handed, how many hairs are on a flea's rear end or whatever, but when it comes to the safety and health of people we have a very limited income which isn't fair. I don't think it's fair. I'm telling you my life as a mother not as a person because what the heck, I'm going to be a check number. I have a heart attack. I've seen them carry people out of the mill. I've seen light fixtures come down, smash a guy's leg, who hasn't worked in the last 3 years? who will probably never be back to work. But when they carried him out in the ambulance they called another man in four hours early to work his job. So it was of no value. They still produced their steel. That's what their concern is. They're not concerned about me, or about April or about anybody else. They worry about making steel. And we think our government is the only thing, management refuses to spend the money on us, our government is the only thing that we have to depend on. OSHA is the only thing that protects our job. And I think that if you would get out into a work force, come into the mill and monitor us on our job in our own environment, then you will understand why we're not happy with our respirators, and why we try to avoid, as much as possible, wearing them. Because it hinders us.

April Mainwaring - We have 3,200 employees and we have 1,200 respirators. We have respirators that sit in little emergency stations throughout the blast furnace and the mill that are there all the time. I might need it for 4 hours and then put it back, make sure it has air in it and it's set to go. The next guy might not even do that. So we might get gassed and someone's got to run for the station and pick up an air tank and it's broke and run 50 yards already before he finds out it doesn't even work. So, if you can bear it, it will be better for our jobs and maybe add 20 years to our life that we can enjoy our lives. That would be all we can ask for. Just give us our life because we have to work in the steel mill. That's where we make our money. This here is very academic. We've sat through for 2 days and when we go back we are really going to hit them with everything. They are not going to be able to handle us, because we have such an education. We have met so many people from all over the world and talked to them about their problems and they have listened to us. We are just 2 steel workers as a matter of fact, we can't even compare to the men that work in a steel mill. We're more susceptible to what goes on there because we're out there and people say "What are you doing there anyway?" How'd you get there?" We need a job. But, when we get back there they're really going to be shocked. For two women to come up here and speak to this crowd of people and to be a steel worker it's really amazing that there is not another steelworker in this place. That's what is shocking, to have 3 people from a work force that use respirators everyday and there's three of us here. We can only speak for the 3 of us. And I'm sure that if you went out into the working world you'd find out what the people out there think. That you have to use a respirator every day. Somebody's going to make it better and somebody's going to make it really effective, that it's going to save you life. I think that there's enough knowledge in this room that they can come up with one. Thank you, that's all I have to say.

Valerie Cale - I'd just like to say I've met with NIOSH. I'm pretty active in the labor movement. I was at a seminar in Washington with NIOSH and it was very informal. I learned a lot. I don't understand how anybody can have all their brains in one body, in this conference, it's really academic. The Federal government most likely paid for all the sessions here and I can understand the reasoning. It's really nice, I wish I had some of your brains. But I think it's real nice that our Federal government would come up with a session that NIOSH has taken the opportunity of having all of you big people here, all these big brains, that maybe we can get together with some of the dummies at another seminar and all you doctors can come to one of our sessions. You might be in the same situation I'm in. You might not be able to comprehend such a low level but I think that there's always room for improvement. I think that it's very necessary, and I sort of feel in my heart, that our government is finally taking a look at this situation as a whole and they see that there has to be some kind of improvement. Because, like I said, you can't put a respirator and all of this other equipment, plus 30 more pounds, on somebody's back and tell them to go in 120 degrees around a blast furnace, and tell them to do a job. It's impossible. We're only human and we can only take so much. In fact, Bruce has pretty well informed me about the whole situation in setting up this, but I think it would be real nice if our government would coordinate the thing with one of you people. We can get out with the working man, maybe through our International Union, and come and hear working people; hear what our complaints are. Because you're not going to find the answer in a dummy. These tests that are done, monitoring someone in an air conditioned lab, it's not a true result. It's what the working man is subject to, or fireman. Get out there and see those people and understand that we are human and we can only take so much. And so we're not going to you guys that manufacture respirators, we're not putting you down. It's there available to us but it's not the answer, we need something that we can use and appreciate. It's not the working man that doesn't want to wear a respirator, because he loves his life like anyone else. He wants to go home to his wife and to his children and he wants to go out, to be able to function as a human being. He doesn't want to die of black lung or whatever. And compensating us for black lung is not the answer. It doesn't take away the pain or the agony or the trauma that we have to go through. So compensation isn't the answer. The answer is getting the proper equipment to fit us. That's all we want. I don't think it's too much. I've heard a few people at work. We'd like to have this for our employees but it costs too much money. What's money compared to your life. Because if you're sitting in an office and you're ordering these respirators for a person, your boss is putting pressure on you. You're just working guys like everybody else. Everybody's got to make a living. Don't be afraid to come up with some bucks or tell your people that, Hey, this is what we need. Regardless of what the cost is. We need it. You might be successful in saving somebody's life. And you might get merits. You might get a gold medal in heaven, or something. I don't know. But don't be concerned about the cost. Be concerned about the individual and the man in the workplace because that's what keeps our economy going. So that's all I have to say. I'm very proud to have the opportunity to address you people, and thanks a lot.

Darrel Douglas - What kind of respirators do you use and what kind of training did you receive before you started using them?

Valerie Cale - I personally, Sir, have had no training, whatsoever. My boss just told me to put the respirator on and go do your job.

April Mainwaring - When I first started in the steel mill I went to work as a blast furnace laborer. They make iron from raw material in the ground and they ship it out to a mill that puts manganese to it and makes steel. My first week on the job was, first you go to the storeroom, and you get some greens, you get a hard hat, and some goggles and some metatarsal shoes, and maybe put two more sets of clothes on under those greens and go down in this classroom. And in the classroom they taught us exactly what you would do if you found a man lying in a corner or under a stove or in a stock yard. Go get this air tank and put this on this guy and drag him out. It didn't make any sense really. I didn't know what the hell was going on. And that was one week of training. They taught me what we did in a blast furnace. The second week we put a blast furnace on that had been off for 2 years. I was the oldest in the group. I was the only female and there were maybe eighteen 18-year old fellows. But they went to work in a blast furnace shoveling out tullieres. My job was to go to the emergency stations to fill air tanks, Scott Air Paks, resuscitators, make sure that they worked, make sure that there were stretchers. Make sure the face mask was clean. I never had any kind of training whatsoever as to how to fill the thing. I didn't know anything about it. I'd just had a weeks training how to save one's life and how to use this thing, but not to go and prepare this for someone to come up if there's an emergency and say Hey, this shouldn't be like this. That's my fault. Because I was to do this job. I refused to do it. I went to 3 places and thought that doesn't seem too hard, but while I was walking to those 3 places I started thinking. I could turn around right now and there could be a man or woman laying on the ground. What am I to do? I'm probably going to run the other way. Because I don't know how to save this man's life. I don't know what to do for him. All I know is what someone told me. That maybe was a 2-day course. I walked back to the boss and I said, "Hey, this is not for me. You fire me. You got to put somebody to this job that knows what the hell is going on." And I walked away. And I refused to do the job. I like to say I think most of you know that under the Federal law U.S. Steel will give you all the training they possibly can. They do make an effort because they have to. The law says that they must train people to do certain jobs. They must make you aware of what your work environment is like. They don't always. It's just like if I would take you right now and take you into the steel mill. You don't know what it's like. We're subject to the same thing. We do have this training but when you go there with no knowledge at all of what it is, such as filling the air tanks and everything, you don't know how to do it. If you don't know absolutely anything about it, and you learn it for the first time, you're not going to learn. It takes a long time for the average working person with limited education to be able to understand. It's probably just like your first day on the job. You don't know what the hell you're supposed to do. And they want to make you the foreman of the job. They're required by law to educate

us, but they only do that for insurance purposes. But if you don't know anything about it there's no way you can learn but in the job. That's what we find a lot in the mill. I could sit here and tell you, you can read about the steel mills and I can take you in there for a week and you can think you understand it. But when I tell you to go up to the rougher and set up the rougher for a sixteenth of an inch, the great big thing they slide the steel through that flips it over and makes it into smaller size. If I told you to set up that mill you'd say "what's wrong with you?" "You in a coma or what?" Because you don't know. So if you want to really know what's going on you have to be out there and get experience. Because that's the best teacher. We don't get that. You don't get experience unless you've done it, and you don't get the opportunity to do it all the time. The jobs change and your're sent to different areas. But as far as gas rescue, our blast furnaces usually we send our people for a week's training. That doesn't make you a scholar. That doesn't mean you can save somebody's life because they've given you a weeks training.

April Mainwaring - When you first go into the mill you're indoctrinated. You are told what's going on and you are going to work in. That comes with the training. That's like two days in the five days and in two days we should know everything about it. Taking apart every piece of it. Taking apart and putting back together. They're not saying that everybody knows it, but you can do that my memory if you know you're getting paid for it. I can sit and take a respirator apart and put it back together by memory because I know I'm getting paid for it. But you do it out of memory, out of knowledge. Just because you know how to take it apart doesn't mean you're going to be able to save someones life. I've been active in the labor movement as I mentioned, I took a course in CPR because I've seen people in the well that have had heart attacks and I might be able to save somebody's life some day. But because I took that course last year doesn't mean if you have a heart attack here I'm going to be any good to you. There's no guarantee. I may punch you in the heart and break your rib. You just don't know.