

Mayor Bloomberg calls for federal crackdown on bogus OSHA classes

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[Mayor Bloomberg](#) called on the feds to crack down on bogus construction safety programs Sunday after a Daily News sting exposed trainers teaching crucial 10-hour courses in two hours.

An undercover reporter attended what was supposed to be a 10-hour federal [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)'s training course above a [Bronx](#) bar, paying \$125. The course lasted 2 hours and 17 minutes, during which some classmates sipped beers on breaks.

"It's very worrisome. We depend on OSHA to train the workers here so that you're safe when you walk by a construction site, so that the people who work on that site are safe," Bloomberg said. "I don't know if these stories are accurate, but if they are, OSHA should do something about it right away."

OSHA officials said they will look into the paper's findings.

"We're going to monitor this and see what's going on," said [Earl Hicks](#) of OSHA's [Washington](#) office.

Hicks confirmed OSHA has opened 10 investigations nationally of this growing problem, including two in [New York](#) that have already resulted in license suspensions.

In July, an undercover investigator working for the city School Construction Authority was able to buy six fake OSHA cards certifying the holder had completed a rigorous 30-hour OSHA course. A certified OSHA trainer has been suspended as the investigation continues.

And in June, OSHA officials confirmed, the agency suspended another trainer in response to a News report that an immigrant worker who received no more than a two-hour safety lecture was able to obtain a certificate stating he had completed 30 hours of lessons on tower crane safety.

At the same time, Hicks said OSHA has put together a "watch list" of trainers "who have been subject to corrective action including suspension or revocation of their trainer status."

The list, which the agency expects to make public in weeks, will prevent trainers whose certification has been revoked from obtaining new approval at a different OSHA training facility.

Construction union officials complain that while the demand for OSHA safety courses has increased, the agency's response to growing fraud has been feeble.

[Martin Daly](#), who supervises OSHA-approved training at the [District Council of Carpenters' Labor Technical College](#), said the union has repeatedly alerted OSHA and the city Buildings Department about problems with bogus cards and shoddy training.

"As far as I know, they've taken no action," he said.

A new city requirement demands hardhats working on buildings 15 stories or higher complete a 10-hour OSHA training course by July. Those who have already done so must take a refresher course within five years.

Daly and other construction insiders allege there's been a spike in bogus classes and fake certificates.

The course, called the OSHA 10, is designed to combat the record number of construction deaths (19) and injuries (181) in the city in the last year. Many of the injuries and deaths occurred after workers ignored construction site safety rules.

New York Daily News **Feb. 2, 2009**

Editorial

Turning OSHA's 10-hour construction safety training into a 2-hour joke puts lives at risk

Monday, February 2nd 2009, 4:00 AM

Theodorakis for News

A 10-hour safety course in this building turned out to be only two hours.

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A Daily News investigations team report that appeared on Sunday's front page was a loud warning about the current state, and the future, of construction safety in [New York City](#). The alarm must be heeded.

With deaths and injuries on building sites running at record levels, City Hall, federal monitors, industry leaders and organized labor chiefs mounted a concerted drive to reduce casualties. All agreed that the toll

of 19 fatalities and 181 cases of serious bodily harm in a year was simply too many - and that many of the accidents had been avoidable.

Remedial actions included the installation of new leadership in the floundering city Department of Buildings and a sizable investment of additional taxpayer dollars in the agency. But it was clear that, while very necessary, stepped-up regulation and tougher enforcement alone would not be the answer.

Among those with parts to play in reducing the carnage were the men and women who engage in the dangerous business of erecting and dismantling structures. The federal [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) issued sound regulations requiring everyone working on a building 15 stories or higher to complete a 10-hour safety course. The deadline for compliance is July.

But, as revealed by The News yesterday, some of the instruction training is nothing but a slipshod fraud. Reporter Joe Kemp paid the \$125 fee for a course taught by OSHA-certified instructors. He wound up in a room over a bar in the northern [Bronx](#) with roughly 32 hardhats.

According to the feds' rules, they were supposed to get four hours covering health and safety, use of protective gear and protection against falls, electrical shock and falling objects; two hours devoted to handling material and tools, assembling scaffolds and operating cranes and excavation equipment, along with four hours to review or "teach any other construction industry hazards or policies."

In all, 10 hours of OSHA-developed required training.

What [Kemp](#) and his classmates got for their \$125 was a haphazard presentation, with all of 2 hours and 17 minutes of teaching time - beer breaks excluded.

As Kemp described it: "The instructor blew off crucial lessons, such as the section on the proper way to erect scaffolding. He skimmed through slides describing proper angles and measurements to build stairways and set up ladders."

Referring to instructor [Grover Drakeford](#), Kemp also reported:

"Drakeford skimmed over slides that showed proper measurements to build stairways and set up ladders. He appeared not to understand the many requirements regarding handrails and guardrails.

"Frequently he got confused and skipped the rest of the slide. . . . Now came the sound of snoring. 'Only one guy sleeping? That's a good statistic,' Drakeford said."

The lives of hardhats and bystanders alike are at stake. OSHA must crack down.