

New Health Program Brings Free Trainings and Health Screenings to Boston's Neighborhood Auto Shops.



Tiffany Skogstrom, Boston Public Health Commission; Bob Burns, MassCOSH; Rafael Lajara, N&J Auto Body; John Kaselis, N&J Auto Body, Owner; Alberto Pina, Bowdoin Street Health Center.

The Boston Public Health Commission has introduced the "Safe Shops" project, a new city-wide program designed to help auto shops prevent pollution and raise safety awareness. The Safe Shops initiative provides free training and health screenings to automotive workers while connecting shop owners to financial resources to buy safety equipment or make the necessary upgrades to stay in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. The Safe Shops program will give positive publicity to local auto shops that go the extra mile to be good neighbors.

"Auto Shops are important members of the business community", said Roger Swartz, Director of the Community Initiative Bureau at the Boston Public Health Commission. "That's why we are providing free training and education to help shops improve workplace safety, environmental practices, and neighborhood conditions."

Outreach Workers from the Boston Public

Health Commission, Bowdoin Street Health Center and the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH) are visiting shops and collecting worker health surveys in shops across the city. The information collected is completely anonymous and used to develop auto shop worker trainings and other resources.

There are currently three "Tail Gate Trainings" offered per month. Bob Burns, an occupational and environmental trainer from MassCOSH, takes a traveling show to shop sites interested in hosting a training event. During the hour-long presentation workers watch a video, review safety equipment and participate in discussions on how to protect themselves and the environment while doing their job. Translation is offered and lunch is provided to compensate workers for taking time off from work.

"Safe Shops has helped me to save some money and improved the quality of our paint

jobs", said John Kaselis, owner of N&J Auto Body at 286 Adams St. in Dorchester, MA. "We are more efficient now and not wasting paint, which in the long run saves more money for the business. I am also concerned about the environment and using the techniques we learned makes it more environmentally friendly and safe."

Kaselis hosted the first Safe Shop training on personal protective equipment and safe work practices and was able to send two of his employees to a special 'Spray Technique and Analysis Research' (S.T.A.R.) training center with the support of the Safe Shops program. Jeremy Guay, S.T.A.R. Program Instructor at the Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School Auto Body program in Charlton, MA, gave N&J Auto Body employees a hands-on learning experience to reduce wasted paint from overspray, and reduce exposure to toxic paint fumes.

N&J Auto Body and all shops participating in Safe Shops trainings receive a Safe Shop

Certificate of Completion to hang in their windows identifying them as making an effort to reduce neighborhood pollution.

Another way that this program is having a direct and positive impact on the quality of life for auto shop workers is the effort to link them to health care.

"While these workers are exposed to a variety of toxic substances on a daily basis", said Davida Andelman from the Bowdoin Street Health Center, "few of them have basic health care or know how to use personal protective equipment they need to prevent long term illness from chemical exposure."

Partner groups such as The Health Connection, Boston's Public Health Van, and the Mayor's Health Line have organized monthly health screenings for auto shop workers called 'Dia de la Salud' ('Day of Health'). These screenings refer workers and their families to health care resources as well as providing screenings for HIV, cholesterol, diabetes and offer counseling on men's health issues.

Safe Shops project is supported by Grant Number U50/CCU124328 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and a collaboration of the Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Inspectional Services, Boston Main Streets Association, Bowdoin Street Health Center, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Center, and MassCOSH.

For more information on the Safe Shops



Jonathan Matos, N&J Auto Body; Juan Saldana, N&J Auto Body; Jeremy Guay, Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School, Instructor; Tehudis Salcedo, Boston Public Health Commission; Bob Burns, MassCOSH; Tiffany Skogstrom, Boston Public Health Commission; John Kaselis, N&J Auto Body, Owner; Alberto Pina, Bowdoin Street Health Center.

Boston project or to schedule a training, health screening or financial consultation, please contact Tiffany Skogstrom, Safe Shops

Project Coordinator at the Boston Public Health Commission: 617-534-2667 or tskogstrom@bphc.org.

