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NAHB SLAMS NEW ERGONOMIC STANDARD OVER FLAWED PROCESS

Impractical Construction Methods and Lack of Safety Guidelines Cited

WASHINGTON, July 22 - The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) expressed its strong disappointment today with a recently published standard on workforce safety that has been deemed ineffective and unworkable by the residential and commercial construction industry.

The development of the A10.40 standard on ergonomics, which was spearheaded by the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), was overseen and approved through a deeply divided "consensus" process that did not reflect the concerns of the affected industries. It was published by The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) despite strenuous objections from a coalition of industry representatives on the committee in July.

"It is troubling that ASSE can subvert the ANSI process in order to impose its own vision on the construction industry," said NAHB President Sandy Dunn, a home builder from Point Pleasant, W.Va. "The standard will be useless for the construction industry, so it is encouraging that there are several other effective resources available to ensure the health and safety of construction workers, which is our biggest priority."

An appeal brought about by the Construction Employers Coalition, which opposes the standard as it is currently written, was denied in June. In refusing the appeal, ANSI has decided that "consensus" for a standard does not require the agreement of the industry where the standard applies. In addition to NAHB, the coalition is comprised of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), Associated Builders & Contractors, Inc. (ABC), the American Subcontractors Association (ASA) and the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA). In addition to the Coalition members, 11 other firms and organizations also voted in opposition to the standard.

"In effect, ASSE has created its own version of consensus and has adopted an unworkable program, despite strong objection from the construction industry," said Dunn. "It is not surprising

that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) actually resigned from the consensus committee so as not to be associated with the final product."

In describing its objections to the impractical recommendations to the standard, NAHB pointed to a section that suggests cutting drywall into three-foot pieces, which would not fit on the framing used by nearly all architects, designers and builders. NAHB also said that the standard would not help reduce workplace injuries, because it does not provide information on how to be safe. Rather than providing workplace safety instructions, it offers vague suggestions for employers to examine activities that involve such things as "force," "pushing," or "lifting." The ANSI/A10 Committee itself admits that the standard is not intended to address the causes of injuries.

There are a number of resources currently available that are useful to residential construction employers in preventing workplace soft-tissue injuries, including NAHB's Jobsite Safety Video, Home Builders' Safety Program, the NAHB-OSHA Jobsite Safety Handbook: English-Spanish Edition, and the Toolbox Safety Talks: English-Spanish.

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NS2008-111

ABOUT NAHB: The National Association of Home Builders is a Washington-based trade association representing more than 235,000 members involved in residential building, remodeling, multifamily construction, property management, subcontracting, design, housing finance, building product manufacturing and other aspects of residential and light commercial construction. Known as "the voice of the housing industry," NAHB is affiliated with more than 800 state and local home builders associations around the country. NAHB's builder members will construct 80 percent of the more than 1.08 million new housing units projected for 2008.

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