Looking back on the past few years of nail gun safety training and recognizing that what has been and continues to be the most important factor to the success of this program is that our work force knows we care. Outlining “Specific Rules” is the very first element we present for the different applications and usage of nail guns. We then cover “General Safety Rules for Nail Gun Use” that address many of the common sense variables of nail gun safety that reminds everyone of the basics, the foundation of nail gun safety. We then will discuss “Nail Gun Injury Cases”, which involves our history where we were and where we are going, and what we have achieved. This is the customization of your training program.

It’s very important to learn from your mistakes and not dwell on them but create an environment of positive change to improve what once was a bad situation. When sharing your shortcomings especially during training from a Safety Director’s stand point I’ve learned during those shared experiences that the crew will then share their own experiences. This involvement keeps it fresh, this personal reflection and review spurs the mentoring process of sharing experiences which are good at times and bad for others. We have made incredible progress in nearly eliminating nail gun accidents that included an extreme drop our lost time accidents ratio.

Nail gun accidents range from the very minor puncture wound to some more serious penetrating damage. It’s very, very important to examine personal injury cases within your organization in order to address disturbing behaviors and trends. It requires a much closure look at nail gun safety and the existing culture of misuse and mistreatment of such equipment.

After reviewing the data collected and conducting interviews with some of the injured workers, you will discovered that nearly all the accidents could have been prevented by some basic instructions and proper nail gun type application. What was apparent from the beginning was that the potential for the gun to discharge multiple shots when framing was causing the bulk of the injuries.

There are two basic types of nail gun functions relating to this particular application: the single shot gun (that has a restrictive trigger) for use in framing, and a multi-shot gun for usage in sheathing (that has no restriction). When a carpenter is setting up for the use of a nail gun, he would most likely grab the gun that was available and in good working order. In some cases an employee who needed a gun for framing would pick up a gun that was already set up for sheating (a different application), that’s where the problems would occur for us. The recognition of the differences in the two basic applications for nail gun usage (framing vs. sheeting) wasn’t taken into consideration before using the gun. Training would occur if warranted prior to usage but most tradesmen have been using nail guns for years and had become accustomed to using whatever gun was available.

What could we do in order to allow our supervisory personnel the ability to recognize these differences from a distance? Our shop foreman came up with the idea to paint the single-shot guns (with a restrictive trigger mechanism) tops bright red. This not only allowed the supervisor or the safety manager and others the ability to see if the gun’s use was proper, but it also helped the employee quickly chose the right type of gun for their particular activity.

We also partnered with our safety postings supplier (Compliant Poster Company AccuPost) to put together a safety poster that would address nail gun safety, something that I had not seen or could find. It addresses:

- General Safety Rules for Nail Gun Use
- Multi-Shot and Single-Shot Nail Guns
- Nail Gun Injuries
- Handheld Nail/Stamping Guns
- Fasteners/Attachments/Hoses
- Flying Objects
- Noise
It also addresses the Occupational Safety and Health Administrations – General Duties Clause (OSH Act of 1970), which states:

(a) Each Employer
   (1) Shall furnish to each of his/her employees employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his/her employees;
   (2) Shall comply with occupational safety standards promulgated under this Act.
(b) Each employee shall comply with occupational safety and health standards and all rules, regulations, and orders issued pursuant to this Act, which are applicable to his/her own actions and conduct.

What was a “not so recognized hazard” before now has become one that can be dealt with by not only proper training, but by the visual recognition application. There are so many different manufacturers of nail guns with various colors to distinguish them from one another, but by the painting the tops red on our single-shot nail guns it has become easier to spot the potential misuse of a tool.

QUESTIONS
If you have question or concerns, please contact Bo Bradley, Safety & Health Director at (916) 371-2422 or bradleyb@agc-ca.org.