

From Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry

I hope everyone has had a great start to 2017. We have already had a number of significant announcements and changes inside the department, and I'd like to take a minute to reflect on some of those.

We recently released the number of workplace fatalities inspected in 2016 by the Occupational Safety and Health Division. The number of fatalities increased, with the construction industry being the most hazardous in the state, logging 19 of the 48 fatalities we reported. As I travel across the state meeting with employers and employees, I will continue to stress that these type of workplace accidents can be prevented with both proper safety training coupled with the use of adequate personal protective equipment.

I always take these deaths personally. The fatalities were someone's wife or husband, sister or brother, mother of father, son, daughter or grandparent. They were best friends and co-workers at an average age of 42. It is imperative that we continue to work to increase the safety and health of our workers across the state as much as possible.

Moving forward, PSIM will continue to track falls, struck-bys and other incidents throughout North Carolina. I'd like to commend and thank Anne Weaver and Karen Bogner for their efforts in tracking statistics for where accidents occur.

I'd also like to thank two long-time employees who recently announced their retirement effective Feb. 1. Julie Chang has spent 23 years in our Information Technology Division, while Neal O'Briant in our Communications Division has been with the department for nearly 32 years. Both made immeasurable contributions to the NCDOL, and they will be sorely missed.

I wish them both well in their future endeavors and look forward to another great year for all of us in 2017.



Employee News

- Congratulations to Scott Karriker, West Compliance, for earning MESH certification.
- Congratulations to Jay Wood, West Compliance, for earning Construction MESH certification.
- Our condolences to the friends and family of Doris Dunst, who died Jan. 11. Doris worked with NCDOL until her retirement during the Brooks administration.
- Our condolences to Emily McGill on the death of her mother, Jan. 16.

New Hires

- Allen Moore, Safety Compliance Officer I, OSH East Compliance, Raleigh
- Timothy Williams, Safety Compliance Officer I, OSH East Compliance, Raleigh
- Mark Slade, Safety Compliance Officer I, OSH East Compliance, Raleigh
- Michelle Schmitt, Processing Assistant IV, ETTA, Raleigh
- Jason Tyson, Information and Communications Specialist III, Communications, Raleigh
- Denese Ballew, Safety Compliance Officer I, OSH West Compliance, Asheville
- David Crank, Elevator Inspector, Elevator, Buncombe County

Retirements

- Julie Chang, Business and Application Tech Analyst, Information Technology, Raleigh
- Neal O'Briant, Information and Communications Specialist III, Communications, Raleigh

Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry presents Neal O'Briant with a certificate of appreciation during a dessert reception held Jan. 31 in the Labor Building to celebrate his retirement from NCDOL after nearly 32 years of service.



Check Your January Pay Statements

Please check your January pay statements in Beacon to make sure you are being correctly deducted for your NCFlex plans. You will need to contact Human Resources no later than Friday, Feb. 10, if you have incorrect NCFlex premium deductions.

- OSH Employees: Please contact Beth.Benson@labor.nc.gov if your NCFlex premium deductions are incorrect.
- Administration and Standards and Inspections employees: Please contact Stacey.Thompson@labor.nc.gov if your NCFlex premium deductions are incorrect.

Please include as much information as possible in your email and attach any documentation you printed during the annual enrollment process in eEnroll. If you enrolled by phone, please include any confirmation numbers you were given.

You will find plan information and premium amounts in the enrollment guide. You may view the 2017 NCFlex enrollment guide here:

https://ncoshr.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/documents/files/2017_NCFlex_Enrollment_Guide.pdf

Upcoming Birthdays

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| 2-4 Kevin O'Barr | 2-13 Jack Brinson | 2-19 Candice Fagnani |
| 2-6 Mark Hutchens | 2-13 Ellen Allbritton | 2-20 Terry Carroll |
| 2-8 Pat O'Brien | 2-15 Yvonne Hamilton-Thomas | 2-22 Fleda Anderson |
| 2-9 Russell DeShield | 2-15 Deborah Samad | 2-22 Stephen Able |
| 2-10 Kaye Thibodeaux | 2-15 Jackie Tanner | 2-24 Abigael Newton |
| 2-10 Granville Hayes | 2-16 Rose Gray-Shindler | 2-24 Eric Smith |
| 2-10 Selenia Genao | 2-16 Peggy Remé | 2-25 Derek Bailey |
| 2-11 Mark Taylor | 2-17 Steve Burris | 2-25 Kevin McGuire |
| 2-11 Angela Hamilton | 2-17 James Washington | 2-28 Melissa Scally |
| 2-12 Blanca Acevedo | 2-18 Jeff Hand | 2-29 Jessica McBride |
| 2-13 Tom Chambers | 2-19 Mike Barnhardt | |

What's New @ Your Library

By NICK VINCELLI, LIBRARIAN

New Print Titles

- *Safety+ Health* (January 2017). National Safety Council, 2016. *Donated by Wanda Lagoe (OSH-ETTA)*.
- *Valve Inspection and Testing* (API 598-2016). American Petroleum Institute, 2016.
- *Visual Inspection of Compressed Gas Cylinders* (CGA C-6-2013). Compressed Gas Association, 2013

New DVDs

- *Pesticide Protection Training for Agricultural Workers* (DVD 775—English/Spanish). EVM Productions and CBHA; 15 minutes; 2010. *Donated by Regina Cullen (OSH-ASH)*.

Online FYIs

- *Behind the Wheel at Work* (December 2016)
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/motorvehicle/ncmvs/newsletter/ncmvsnewsletterv1n5.html>
- *Final Rule on Working Place Examinations in Metal, Nonmetal Mines...*
<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/msha/msha20170117>
- *Final Rule to Protect Workers from Beryllium Exposure*
<https://www.osha.gov/berylliumrule/index.html>
- *Electric Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution: Electrical Protective Equipment Requirements*
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3875.pdf>
- *NIOSH Research Rounds* (January 2017)
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCDC/bulletins/181490d>
- *OSHA's Final Rule ... General Industry Walking-Working Surfaces and Fall Protection Standards*
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3903.pdf>
- *Protecting Workers From Slips, Trips and Falls During Disaster Response*
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3907.pdf>
- *Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs in Construction*
https://www.osha.gov/shpguidelines/docs/8524_OSHA_Construction_Guidelines_R4.pdf
- *Winter Storm Safety Tips and Resources*
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/winter/>

Farewell, or a Brief History of My Time at NCDOL

“How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

*—Winnie the Pooh**

It's hard to believe that just 11,536 days ago I started working at the N.C. Department of Labor. That adds up to 31 years and nearly seven months ago. I was a fresh-faced 23-year-old, taking a temporary job that paid \$4.50 an hour through Olsten Staffing with the department's Pre-Apprenticeship Division. Sandra Sherrill was the first in a series

of wonderful bosses I've had at Labor. Most current employees haven't been around long enough to remember this division. It became known as the Training Initiatives Bureau during Harry Payne's two terms. During Commissioner Berry's first term, the Legislature transferred the bureau and its staff to the Community College System.

After three months with Pre-Apprenticeship, June Hood in the Personnel Division told me about a job opening in the Publications Division. It was another temporary position but paid directly by NCDOL instead of through a temp agency. I was getting a raise to \$5.84 an hour! I worked in the Patterson House/Howell House on North Street along with Wanda Smitherman under Publications Director Jim Tolbert. Rex Edwards came in to typeset on some evenings and Friday afternoons. We were on the second floor with the two-person Private Personnel Service Division. Wage and Hour folks were on the first floor and in the basement. The Labor Building was undergoing extensive renovations during this time. We moved in to Pepto Bismol pink carpets and trim in September 1987.

On Aug. 1, 1988, I finally became a permanent employee of the N.C. Department of Labor. Jim promised he would work to reclassify my position from a clerk typist III to something better. He came through a year later, when I became an editorial assistant. Jim died from ALS in early 1991. We worked without a director for over a year.

In the spring of 1992, John Brooks met Louise Stone at some Democratic function and hired her to become the director of Publications. She swept into the department with gusto and left five years later, leaving a trailing scent of tea rose cologne. (Sandra Hamm and Ann Woodard convinced me to talk to her about how overpowering it was. Louise stopped wearing it as when I was in the office but still wore it with a vengeance when I was on vacation.) Louise and I took over the task of producing the employee newsletter each month. During her five years, Louise worked to upgrade my position again. I became an information and communications specialist (T-grade), but it was easier to call myself an editor than having to explain what my official title meant.

After Louise left in 1997, Mike Daniels became the bureau chief. Before that time, Harry had decided to reorganize a lot of the divisions in the department. Publications had merged with Communications during his first term and had become the Publications Bureau. I continued as an editor. I took on doing procurement for the bureau when Shelisa Silver, the secretary for Communications, went out on maternity leave. When Nancy Baird took Shelisa's position, I got to keep doing it.

Commissioner Berry was elected in November 2000 and took office in January 2001. She hired Juan Santos as the director of the Communications Division. He's another who swept into office with lots of changes. We gave up using *The Chicago Manual of Style* and started editing everything according *The AP Stylebook*. He eventually decided to move my position from Publications into one reporting directly to him in Communications in October 2005. I kept all of my job duties and got to start dealing with the media as well. My position became an information and communications specialist II.

Juan died in January 2008. Commissioner Berry talked Dolores Quesenberry into becoming the communications director since it was the beginning of an election year. Heather Crews had left her position as the information and communications specialist III shortly before Juan's death to become the safety awards coordinator. Her job was posted for in-house applicants only. I was the only applicant. John Baldwin and Dolores interviewed me, and fortunately I got the job. I added editor of the *Labor Ledger* and compiler of the annual report to my duties while keeping all my previous duties.

We interviewed many candidates for my old position in the summer of 2008 and hired Eursula Joyner. She did not stay long, taking over as the safety awards coordinator after Heather left the department that fall. Seems like there are patterns to life.

During this time, all of state government was dealing with budget reductions due to the recession. John Baldwin had to freeze refilling the job, but not before Dolores and I had reviewed over 200 applications. Eventually John eliminated the position, leaving just two of us doing the work that had been done by five people. We became Team Communications.

Mary Katherine Pegram joined Communications in a resurrected information and communications specialist II position in October 2016. Jason Tyson joined us a week ago to fill my position. I feel good knowing Dolores will have them on Team Communications.

Over the years, I've had wonderful opportunities at Labor. We work for the best state government agency. It may be trite to say so, but we really are like a family, including a few eccentric cousins. My takeaway points are that it's not too soon to start saving for retirement. It will be here before you know—and sooner than otherwise possible if you save. And never pass up an opportunity to learn. Unfortunately, once you learn how to do something, though, you might not get to give up doing it (like me and E-Procurement).

There are so many others who have been part of my journey that I wish I had time to name and thank personally. I will miss seeing my Labor friends as frequently, but I look forward to what retirement will bring: making more pottery, playing bridge, traveling, gardening, cooking, volunteering. It's been a great ride. Farewell!

Neal O'Briant

*And, as Paul Harvey would say, here's the rest of the story about the Winnie the Pooh quote. My natural curiosity led me to try to find the origin of Pooh's quote. It turns out, regrettably, that A.A. Milne did not write these words for Pooh. People have misattributed to him this cleaned-up version of a quote from *The Other Side of the Mountain*, a 1975 tearjerker based on the life of Jill Kinmont, an Olympic skiing hopeful paralyzed in an accident: "How lucky I am to have found someone and something that saying goodbye to is so damned awful."