

# SMART BUILDING OFFERS A CURE



## UBC Training Sets the Standard in Healthcare Construction

In 1954, births in the U.S. topped four million for the first time. The prosperity and optimism of post-World War II America had couples growing families like never before, resulting in the great “baby boom.”

Those boomers cheered Beatlemania, marveled at the moon landing, fought in Vietnam and generally lived more prosperous and affluent lives than their parents.

Now in their golden years, they are fueling another boom: the tremendous growth in hospital and healthcare construction as the nation cares for its sizable aging population.

About \$100 billion a year is being spent on new hospital construction and renovations to existing facilities. Urgent care and outpatient centers are sprouting up in strip malls and on street corners all over America - a trend that shows no sign of slowing down.

Unlike other projects, construction in a healthcare setting comes with unique challenges for contractors, their workers and their clients. Dust and dirt stirred up during renovation work can be a life-threatening danger to patients susceptible to infection. Loud noises, of course, are not helpful for people recuperating from illness, and privacy and confidentiality are a must for construction workers who may overhear sensitive, personal information while working.

Completing construction without releasing harmful contaminants or disrupting daily operations, while also keeping the work moving on schedule, are primary concerns for healthcare administrators.

In response, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters has partnered with infection control experts to develop an exclusive training program that teaches carpenters specifically how to work in these difficult environments.

Infection Control Risk Assessment (ICRA) trains UBC members on how to identify potential health dangers, control airflow and work with minimal disruption to patients and staff.

“If your workers are trained, then you have the peace of mind that they know what they’re doing and they’re much more efficient when they’re setting up their infection control barriers and going through the protocol,” Andy Bauer with McCarthy Building Companies said. “They’re not waiting to ask questions or doing things wrong that have to be redone later.”

The CRC has invested in state-of-the-art simulations at its training schools, which put ICRA trainees through real-world situations similar to what they will encounter when working in actual hospitals.

“You may be working on one side of the wall and you have a patient on the other side of the wall, so it’s important to be aware of your surroundings and how to deal with it,” Kevin Moonier (Local 97) said.

With 100,000 people every year dying from healthcare-associated infections (HAI), the industry is on a mission to find the latest and best techniques to cut risk. They are demanding the same of construction crews they hire to work in their buildings.

“It’s very important when they come here that they understand the risk. We need the construction guys to tell us what they’re going to be doing, how much dust they’re going to generate and what their procedures are,” Mary Duncan, an infection control nurse with Mercy health system said. “If we know that they’ve been trained and are up to date on what they need to do, it makes us more comfortable having them in our facilities.”



**Al Bond,**  
Executive Secretary-Treasurer

“To keep the patients safe we go through an extensive training program, which makes projects more efficient, more productive and gets the job done on time, on budget and in a safe manner.”

HAI costs hospitals an estimated \$20 billion a year. When choosing companies to perform construction work, those contractors that have crews trained on proper infection control have a competitive

advantage in pitching their proposals and bidding on work. The Regional Council’s ICRA training is a three-day certification for members that covers recognizing hazardous materials, building soft walls and other barriers, contaminants, mold removal, controlling airflow and understanding the various types of healthcare facilities they will be working in.



An abbreviated eight-hour awareness training is also offered for hospital officials who want to learn more about ICRA and what the Carpenters union is doing to protect patients and staff during construction. No other trade union offers the comprehensive infection control education that the UBC does.

“I’m hearing from my colleagues across that country that they’re seeing a considerable uptick in the requirements for ICRA training on both coasts,” Tim Wies of T.J. Wies Contracting said. “Typically, what happens there eventually makes its way to middle America.”



TheCarpDC on 

Because of constant technological advances hospitals can become outdated quickly. The quest to keep up and modernize is feeding one of the hottest and most lucrative fields of construction.

Many commercial contractors are marketing their experience and expertise in healthcare construction as a way of setting themselves apart from the pack and getting a piece of the booming business.

While acknowledging the financial rewards that come with this burgeoning segment of the industry, Wies said ICRA’s most valuable benefit is educating construction crews on the smartest and safest way to do this kind of work.

“Our employees are our family. This give me peace of mind as an employer that all of my guys will be going home safe and sound,” he said.