

This Month in Austin AGC History – OSHA Safety Standards Published in May 1971 Lead to Creation of Safety Program

In December 1970 President Richard Nixon signed *The Occupational Safety and Health Act* into law, calling attention to a need to protect workers against hazards encountered on the job. At that time the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was also established within the Labor Department to set and enforce new workplace safety and health standards. The first OSHA safety regulations were published on May 29, 1971 and, according to Austin Chapter meeting archives, the new rules were a regular topic of conversation in the industry amid speculation as to how day-to-day construction work would be impacted.

To help Austin AGC members understand the new safety standards, an educational seminar was held on September 8 at the Villa Capri in Central Austin. The [Villa Capri](#) was a hotel and restaurant located in the 2300 block of I-35, and various AGC meetings were often held there in the 70s and 80s before it was demolished in 1988 to make way for the University of Texas's Frank Denius practice fields. According to [these classic TV commercials](#), the restaurant there served quite a delicious steak!

In February 1972, the Chapter Safety Committee proposed hiring a construction safety expert who could make routine inspections of member jobsites and keep company personnel apprised of the new safety law and regulations. Chapter leadership discussed at length whether to take on the financial risk of a new hire. Ultimately, the Safety Committee was directed to find the right person for this job, and Mr. Royce Faulkner, Chairman of the Chapter Finance Committee at the time, was tasked with coming up with a new dues structure to offset the cost of this new employee. It took several meetings of both the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors to come up with an acceptable revenue proposal for approval, but the Chapter's first ever safety director, Bill Cavanagh, was eventually hired and introduced to the membership during an August 16th AGC meeting at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel attended by 60 members and guests.

Sadly, Mr. Cavanagh passed away just 18 months later in the Spring of 1974, but the Chapter leadership agreed to find an immediate replacement to continue the important new safety service. After numerous resumes were reviewed and interviews conducted, the Chapter ultimately selected retired Air Force pilot and safety professional Delmar "Del" Tally who was officially introduced to the Chapter membership during the September 3rd Board meeting held at the AGC office building.

Throughout the remainder of the 1970s, Mr. Tally consistently grew the Chapter safety services to include routine jobsite inspections and training for company members including OSHA 10 and 30 classes, First Aid/CPR, and various other specialized industry classes. By 1978, he was appointed Executive Director of the Chapter but safety services continued to be provided by additional Chapter staff as demand by local contractors remained strong. Ultimately, in 1992 Del spun off this part of the Austin AGC into a new, independent entity known as Construction Safety and Health (CSHI) where he continued the job of providing inspections and training for the Chapter membership for many years.



Villa Capri Restaurant in Central Austin Where the AGC Hosted 1971 Meeting About the New OSHA Workplace Safety Law



Del Tally (far left) and staff outside the Austin AGC office building in the mid-1980s. Del served as Chapter Safety Director (1974-1978) and then as Executive Director (1978-1992).



Current Safety Director Michael Welvaert Teaches an OSHA 30 Hour Class in the AGC Classroom

After Del retired from CSHI in 2002, the AGC Board of Directors eventually opted to bring safety services back "in house" to the Chapter. Today, our Austin AGC Safety Director works daily with local contractors to help eliminate jobsite hazards and educate the workforce about construction dangers that are always present. Our current Director is Mr. Michael Welvaert who brings his 20 years of military service along with additional experience working for both an electrical and mechanical contractor to the job of assisting AGC company members and their employees with safety. Key services are inspections, safety manual development, training programs on various OSHA standards, hosting of the monthly Safety Committee meeting, and engaging with staff at the Austin area OSHA office.

Also to better serve the safety needs of Texas contractors, the [CompGroup AGC](#) was formed in 1993 as a registered safety group to administer the workers' compensation program on behalf of AGC members. CompGroup AGC offers expert claim and loss prevention services, year-round training opportunities, on-site job inspections and other exclusive member benefits, including extensive practical safety information, workshops and special educational events. In April 2000, CompGroup AGC partnered with Texas Mutual Insurance Company, moving our group to the next level of service. The CompGroup success is often measured by the policyholder general and safety dividends that are returned to members each year, including the 38 Austin AGC companies in this insurance program.



Mr. Royce Faulkner, 1973 Chairman of the Austin AGC and Founder of the Faulkner Construction Company

Looking back on the development of safety services here at the Austin AGC, the key member during the creation of the program was Mr. Royce Faulkner who served as Chapter Chairman in 1973, AGC Texas Building Branch (TBB) Chairman in 1978, as then ultimately as an AGC of America National Director for Life. He founded the Faulkner Construction Company in 1962, and Royce built that firm into a leader in the Austin and Central Texas construction market. With the founding of affiliate companies, the Faulkner Group of Companies expanded to become a major player in almost every aspect of the local construction industry. Faulkner built the eight-building Austin campus of Applied Materials Inc., One Texas Center, the Towers of Town Lake, Akins High School, Pickle Elementary, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Riverbend Church, and many other notable Austin buildings.

Many who worked for and with him over the years will say that Mr. Faulkner built buildings but, even more importantly, he built character in his employees and always held the highest of standards in his business dealings. His legacy continues to hold large presence today in the Austin construction industry, as many of his former employees have gone on to successful careers as leaders of other building companies.

Since the 1970s when Mr. Faulkner and the AGC leadership created the Chapter safety program, we've been proud to help protect every man and woman who wears a hard hat on the jobsite and builds Austin's quality of life every day!