

As in other countries, the impermanent nature of construction projects makes it difficult to apply engineered hazard controls. So far, the lack of a "prevention culture" has limited the use of preventative measures other than personal protective equipment. Unqualified workers are found throughout the industry and the amount of safety training is far below Canadian standards.

The situation is different in some of the larger construction companies. Their visibility and association with high-profile projects makes them more image-conscious and their international connections give them access to sophisticated solutions. *GUTSA Construcciones* and *Empresa ICA* are two of the most important construction firms in the country. Both have stated that quality is the only consideration when purchasing safety products. Industry observers note that the larger Mexican companies promote their high safety standards when trying to outbid foreign competitors on high-profile projects.

## **MINING**

The mining industry is now Mexico's largest consumer of safety-related products. It has an accident rate of about 17 per 100 workers, which ranks it as the third most hazardous industry, behind construction and the sugar/methanol industry. Mining is a relatively small employer, with about 25,000 workers, but it has not been badly hurt by the peso devaluation. Therefore, it has not cut back on equipment purchases as have some other industries. The participation of foreign partners in many of the larger mining ventures has also served to promote international standards. The presence of Canadian mining companies in Mexico may create a foothold for Canadian suppliers. The systems required for mine safety are sophisticated and specialized, and Canadian companies have developed many applicable niche products.

## **CHEMICALS**

According to official statistics, the chemical industry is not particularly dangerous, but it has serious health risks that are very poorly monitored. The low reported accident rate may be due to the fact that health effects of chemical exposure are often not recognized as occupational injuries.

These health threats are real, however, and, as the government begins to take action, a market for a wide range of monitoring and assessment tools is likely to emerge. Multinational companies and large Mexican *grupos* are already major customers for industrial hygiene products. The leading international firms include BASF, Bayer, Exxon, and Ciba. *Grupo CYDSA* is one of the top Mexican firms.