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Business

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Posted on: Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Fight against ice moves to docks

By [Dan Nakaso](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

Union and maritime leaders yesterday heard recovering drug users implore their fellow dockworkers to seek treatment for their ice problems through their companies or union, part of a new collaboration to deal with substance abuse on Honolulu's waterfront.

The four longshoremen were featured in the latest production by filmmaker Edgy Lee addressing Hawaii's crystal methamphetamine epidemic. The 30-minute video will be the centerpiece of a program beginning Friday at Matson Navigation Co. to talk to small groups of members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union to get them to seek treatment — or urge addicted co-workers to get help.

The program will then move to McCabe Hamilton & Renny Co. Ltd., Hawaii Stevedores Inc. and Horizon Lines. About eight weeks later, Lee will unveil a follow-up video addressing some of the issues that will have been raised in the initial group discussions.

Jeffrey Mueller, founder and CEO of RecoveryWorks who also worked on Lee's ice films, will lead the groups through the videos, stopping and starting them to talk about workers' reactions.

"It's a disease that's progressive," Mueller told the group gathered yesterday at the Hawaii Employers Council. "And it will get worse if it's not treated."

Mueller's company works with other Hawaii businesses, but focused on the maritime industry because of the inherent risks of its jobs.

"We chose them first because they have the most dangers," Mueller said. "A hotel worker (using drugs) might forget to tuck in a sheet, and a restaurant worker might drop a tray of drinks. But one mistake on the docks can cost someone their life."

Dockworkers are screened for drugs before employment. Later, they can only be tested following strict protocols.

Nate Lum, Hawaii longshore division chairman of the ILWU, acknowledged the cooperation between union leaders and the heads of

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Matson, McCabe Hamilton & Renny, Hawaii Stevedores and Horizon Lines to get substance-abuse treatment for union workers.

But he urged lower-level managers and human-resources workers at the four companies not to use the program as an opportunity for discipline.

Even one worker who volunteers for treatment and is then punished will ensure that the program fails, Lum said.

"This is not a tool to discipline ... This is a very positive program," Lum told the group yesterday. "It's a big step forward. Let's all work together."

Gary North of Matson responded that "if we burn somebody or get somebody fired ... this thing's going to fail. ... We made a commitment as an industry ... to help, not penalize."

The video begins with Lum and Wes Furtado of the ILWU urging union members to seek help for their drug problems.

Veteran workers then speak directly to co-workers and talk about being addicted to ice for years, costing them their homes, cars, wives and children.

One said he sometimes stayed up for up to six days straight partying with co-workers, then went to work. Another talked about digging for food in garbage cans after losing everything.

Smoking ice brought "the pain, the suffering, the misery," one worker said.

Another said, "it will take you down. Sooner or later, you will go down."

One said that at a low point in his life, he prayed to God to send him a signal if God was real.

The worker then got a call from a co-worker he never met, extending an offer to help.

All of the workers urged fellow workers with drug problems to seek help from the ILWU or their companies. And all of them said that anyone with a problem could also come directly to them.

"But it's up to you," one of them said.

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