

HIGH-RISK INDUSTRIES (AGRICULTURE, CONSTRUCTION, HEALTHCARE, MINING)

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Mining, agriculture, and construction consistently lead the nation in occupational fatalities, with respective rates of 24, 23, and 12 fatalities per 100,000 workers compared with an average overall fatality rate of 4 per 100,000 in 2002. Nonfatal injury rates also are high for people working in these industries.
- Although people working in the healthcare sector have a lower risk for occupation-related fatalities than the above-mentioned industries, the nonfatal injury rate for healthcare workers is one of the highest in all sectors.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC has used industry-specific approaches and partnering to target research on the health of workers in these high-risk industries. The agriculture and construction industries have been targeted since 1990 and as a result are safer than they were a decade ago. CDC has 17 cooperative agreements, including 10 with regional centers for agricultural safety and health research. In addition, university-based researchers in 20 states address safety and health issues across various construction trades. An industry approach for mining began in 1996 with active projects now under way in 30 states. CDC's own intramural research, surveillance, and information dissemination activities also add an important dimension to improving conditions in these high-risk industries. For example, CDC is conducting a specific research program to prevent occupational illness and injury among nurses.

Examples of Program in Action

- CDC improved the safety of people working in the construction industry by identifying fatal falls during communication tower constructions as being an emerging hazard. CDC then worked closely with industry and government partners to identify safe practices.
- CDC sponsored studies to determine the use and effectiveness of Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI). UVGI can be used to reduce exposure to biological agents that could potentially be released in a terrorism incident. In addition, when UVGI is used in indoor environments other than healthcare workplaces it has been shown to reduce the symptoms associated with indoor air quality.
- In the agriculture industry, CDC has supported research to prevent tractor rollovers, the leading cause of farm-related fatalities. This work has led to more effective educational efforts to increase farmers' use of tractor retrofit kits to protect against rollovers.
- CDC has taken a leadership role in conducting research and development studies at operating mine sites to assist the transfer of health and safety advancements in various areas. These include the development of new engineering designs and monitoring strategies for preventing and minimizing rock failures at underground and surface mines, improved training systems and approaches, and the expansion of the extramural mining program to address several high priority topics.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Through surveillance, research, prevention, and control, CDC will continue to work to reduce fatality and injury rates in high-risk industries.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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