What are our priorities?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Respiratory Health Program works with a diverse range of partners in industry, labor, trade associations, professional organizations, academia, and other governmental agencies. The program focuses on:

- Protecting workers from respiratory diseases that are caused or made worse by work exposures
- Optimizing workers’ respiratory health

What do we do?

The program works with partners to conduct research, share information (including state of the art recommendations), provide services, and transfer research findings into practice. Examples include:

- Provide useful national data tracking the burden of work-related respiratory disease and the amounts and types of hazardous workplace respiratory exposures.
- Provide health screening and surveillance services to U.S. coal miners under a program mandated by Federal law called the Coal Workers’ Health Surveillance Program. We help individual miners through early disease detection and provide group data to guide broader prevention activities.
- Conduct multidisciplinary research needed to identify respiratory hazards, characterize their smoking in several publications.
- Identified several emerging hazards through surveillance and the Health Hazard Evaluation program:
  - Silica exposures and associated disease risks (silicosis, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) from manufactured countertops, and
  - Diacetyl exposure/obstructive bronchiolitis risk associated with coffee roasting and grinding in coffee production facilities.
- Coordinated a NIOSH-wide project that continued efforts to build the case for including industry/occupation information in electronic health records. Developed knowledge bases and decision logic for three clinical decision support modules.

What have we accomplished?

- Implemented new requirements of the Mine Safety and Health Administration’s Respirable Coal Mine Dust Rule for adding surface miners and spirometry to NIOSH’s Coal Workers’ Health Surveillance Program. After the first year of implementation, 60% of surface mines had approved surveillance plans and NIOSH directly provided mobile screening services to more than 1000 miners.
- Published an authoritative NIOSH publication, *Promoting Health and Preventing Disease and Injury Through Workplace Tobacco Policies*. It contains new recommendations on emerging practices and e-cigarettes and has already influenced stakeholders to restrict e-cigarette use in nonsmoking areas.
- Identified occupations and industries that most need special programs and policies to reduce smoking and other flavoring chemicals associated with coffee roasting and grinding in coffee production facilities.
- Update physician training and competency evaluation in classifying chest radiographs for findings of pneumoconiosis in partnership with the American College of Radiology.
- Coal Mine Dust rule, which requires substantial infrastructure development. A major focus in 2016 will be on implementing spirometry services.
- Conduct workplace investigations to better characterize occupational exposures to diacetyl and other flavoring chemicals associated with coffee roasting and grinding in coffee production facilities.
- Update physician training and competency evaluation in classifying chest radiographs for findings of pneumoconiosis in partnership with the American College of Radiology.

What’s next?

- Implement new mandates of the Respirable Coal Mine Dust rule, which requires substantial infrastructure development. A major focus in 2016 will be on implementing spirometry services.
- Conduct workplace investigations to better characterize occupational exposures to diacetyl

DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2016-155