



NIOSH

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

Delivering on the Nation's Promise: Safety and Health at Work for All People...through Prevention

On January 28, 1986, at 11:39 a.m., the world witnessed the most horrifying disaster in the history of the American space program as the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded into flames over Cape Canaveral, killing six astronauts and a high school teacher.

On that same day, at least 16 other Americans lost their lives while doing exactly what the astronauts were doing: earning a living. These other workers included a retail manager, a manager of a

manufacturing plant, a president of a drilling company, a lineman, two plasterers, a driller, a farm-worker, a teacher, two truckers, three loggers, a miner, and a special investigator. January 28 was not an unusual day in the work life of America, even taking into account the Challenger catastrophe.

It is estimated that one American worker dies every hour in this country while trying to earn a living.

According to the most current statistics, every day, an average of 23 workers leave home for work, never to return. Ten times this number, about 250 workers each day, die from diseases that were caused or worsened by workplace chemicals and contaminants. According to a 1991 study conducted by the RAND corporation, the cost to the U.S. economy for work injuries alone exceeds \$83 billion annually. The time has come to protect our most valuable resource: the American worker.

What is NIOSH?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) was established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is the federal Institute responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illnesses and injuries. The Institute's responsibilities include:

- Investigating potentially hazardous working conditions as requested by employers or employees
- Evaluating hazards in the workplace, ranging from chemicals to machinery
- Creating and disseminating methods for preventing disease, injury, and disability
- Conducting research and providing scientifically valid recommendations for protecting workers
- Providing education and training to individuals preparing for or actively working in the field of occupational safety and health

How Does NIOSH Differ from OSHA?

Although NIOSH and OSHA were created by the same Act of Congress, they are two distinct agencies with separate responsibilities. OSHA is in the Department of Labor and is responsible for creating and enforcing workplace safety and health regulations. NIOSH is in the Department of Health and Human Services and is a research agency.

NIOSH identifies the causes of work-related diseases and injuries and the potential hazards of new work technologies and practices. With this information, NIOSH determines new and effective ways to protect workers from chemicals, machinery, and hazardous working conditions. Creating new ways to *PREVENT* workplace hazards is the job of NIOSH. With today's economic, health care, and worker's compensation crises challenging our country, *PREVENTION* is an approach whose time has come.

More information about NIOSH and the prevention of occupational diseases and injuries is available by calling the NIOSH toll-free number:

1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674)



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health



NIOSH RESEARCH

"Delivering on the Nation's Promise: Safety and Health at Work for all People... Through Prevention:" This NIOSH vision is all inclusive. NIOSH is therefore responsible for researching the full scope of occupational injury and disease, ranging from the prevention of lung disease among sandblasters to the prevention of workplace stress in the office environment. Because it would be impossible to list all areas of NIOSH research, we have described only a few areas of recent concern. If you need more detailed information on these or other occupational safety and health issues, call the NIOSH toll-free information service:

1-800-35-NIOSH

Indoor Environmental Quality

In 1987, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued the report "Unfinished Business," which ranked indoor air pollution as a greater problem than hazardous waste sites or outdoor air pollution. At that point, NIOSH had already investigated over 400 office buildings in response to complaints about indoor environmental quality, and worker concern has continued to rise. Based on knowledge and experience gained in responding to this problem, NIOSH is collaborating with EPA and other federal agencies to conduct research to identify the unknown causes of many indoor environmental quality complaints.

Cumulative Trauma Disorders

Disability resulting from carpal tunnel syndrome and other "cumulative trauma disorders," also known as "repetitive strain injuries," is the single fastest growing public health problem among American workers. This type of disability comprised more than half of all the occupational illness reported by employers in 1990. NIOSH is conducting research and field testing methods to prevent this problem across the wide span of industries where it is occurring, such as meatpacking, poultry, agriculture, construction, retail, publishing, automotive repair, and data processing.

Violence Against Workers

NIOSH researchers find that 10 percent of men and 40 percent of women who die from injury at work are killed in homicides. It is the leading traumatic work-related cause of death for women in the U.S. Workers at risk include cab drivers, police, and convenience store clerks. NIOSH has begun efforts to prevent violence against workers.

Stress

Worker compensation claims for job stress have doubled in the last decade and now account for 11 percent of all claims of worker disease. In response to this growing epidemic, NIOSH is actively identifying causes, health effects, and means of preventing job stress.

Work-Related Infectious Disease

Infectious disease is becoming an increasing threat in today's workplace. The continuing emergence of AIDS, Hepatitis B, and Tuberculosis, coupled with the rapid growth of health care occupations, creates a significant risk for workplace exposure. Nurses, nursing aids, and orderlies are among the fastest growing occupations in America. NIOSH is responding to increasing requests from employees to investigate outbreaks of infectious disease and is collaborating with other parts of CDC to prevent the continuing spread of these diseases among workers.

Disability Among Farmers and Construction Workers

According to NIOSH research, agriculture and construction are among the most dangerous industries for work-related injuries and diseases. NIOSH has initiated national programs in both industries to identify and prevent the leading hazards that cause disability. To help achieve this goal, NIOSH is building a broad coalition including federal resources, land grant universities, state and local health departments, voluntary associations and nonprofit organizations, and health care providers.

Lead Poisoning

It is widely recognized that lead poisoning is a critical public health problem among children, particularly of low-income families. Even small amounts of lead exposure can be detrimental to a child's learning potential. However, few realize that there is a second population at risk of lead poisoning. Workers in the construction, scrap metal, and battery recycling industries are at risk of lead poisoning, which can result in neurologic and reproductive disability. In addition, these workers may take lead contamination home on their clothes and in their cars, exposing their families. NIOSH is working with state health departments to identify workers at risk, evaluate the problem of lead contamination being carried home from work, and develop economical methods of preventing worker exposure.