

Making Green Jobs Safe Workshop
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
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Good afternoon and thanks for coming to the *Making Green Jobs Safe Workshop*. As a part of its *Prevention-through-Design* Initiative, we are turning our attention to the impact of climate change on the development of enterprises, labor markets and worker safety and health. To be successful, efforts to protect the climate, and adapt to what scientists attending the United Nations' Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen are telling us is the inevitable climate change even if greenhouse emissions stopped today, the engagement of tens of millions of employers and workers around the world will be needed.

Economists tell us that a transition to a low carbon economy does not necessarily need to be a "job-killer," but can actually produce new jobs and lead to a net increase in jobs for the global economy. However, the road to green labor markets may be a bumpy one, and will again require the active participation of governments, employers and workers around the world.

Green jobs are those jobs that reduce the environmental impact of economic enterprises to levels that are sustainable. Green jobs can be found in many sectors of the economy from energy supply, to recycling, and from agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and mining to transportation and others. But, "green" jobs have a high burden to meet. Most definitions of a green job state that such jobs cut consumption of energy, raw materials and water through high-efficiency strategies, help to de-carbonize the economy ultimately reducing and reversing the trend to greater and greater greenhouse-gas emissions, minimize or avoid altogether all forms of waste and pollution, and protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity. That sounds like a tall order to me.

In fact, we in the safety and health community need to ask ourselves the question: are all the things done in the name of *greening* the environment, good for workers, too? We have lately seen several examples where insufficient attention has been paid to how safe the newly "greened" process is to know that a green job is not necessarily a safe one for workers. Substitution of one chemical because it depletes the ozone for another chemical that "greens up" the ozone layer or satisfies some other green environmental goal, but makes workers worse off, are both disturbing as well as increasing.

For a green job to be truly sustainable, the work itself must also be sustainably safe for the person who performs the job. The environmental concept of sustainability must be enlarged, I think. For a job to be called a "green job," it must also be one that can be performed safely and result in no material impairment to worker health.

I thank you very much for participating in the workshop today and I hope you all enjoy it