

NIOSH eNews

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

May 2003

Volume 1, Number 1

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From the Director's Desk

NIOSH Launches eNews!

On behalf of everybody here at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), I am very pleased to launch the inaugural edition of the NIOSH eNews.

eNews is designed to be a direct communications link between NIOSH and the occupational safety and health community both here in the U.S. and around the world. eNews will enable you to know exactly what's going on here at NIOSH and will allow NIOSH to receive your input on our performance. Whether your interest is occupational injury and illness surveillance, research, intervention or education, eNews aims at keeping you connected to everything that NIOSH is doing.

eNews subscribers will get a monthly update on what's new at NIOSH—featured articles, just-released publications, current and upcoming projects, future conferences, and much more will be in the eNews. If news breaks between monthly



Dr. John Howard
Director, NIOSH

newsletters, we'll send out a FLASH report to get the information out to you quickly. Once your email address is connected to NIOSH, you'll automatically get NIOSH eNews every month. No need to access the NIOSH website—all you have to do is open your email!

The NIOSH eNews is a start-up project and it will undoubtedly evolve with time, but only if you—the subscriber—get involved. Whether you're cabled or flying wireless, eNews is for you—so take ownership and tell us what you'd like to see! Send your ideas to nioshenews@cdc.gov.

John Howard
Director

Featured

NIOSH Flags an Unexpected Hazard

One of NIOSH's great strengths is its ability to apply strong scientific research to help identify emerging or previously unsuspected health hazards in the workplace. As a recent example, in May 2000, NIOSH began investigating 8 suspected cases of bronchiolitis obliterans at a popcorn factory in Joplin, Missouri. Bronchiolitis obliterans is a rare, severe lung disease characterized by cough, dyspnea on exertion, and airways obstruction. Four of these workers have been placed on lung transplant lists. Those affected work in either the area of the plant where the popcorn's butter flavoring was mixed or where the popcorn was packaged.

NIOSH based these conclusions on several evaluations at the Joplin plant. Worker assessments revealed that, based on national data, current workers had two to three times the expected rates of respiratory symptoms and self-reports of physician diagnoses of asthma or chronic bronchitis; the rate of obstruction on spirometry was 3.3 times higher than expected. Measurements of the air concentrations of dust and some of the ingredients of butter flavoring, including diacetyl, showed that workers who spend more time in areas with higher air concentrations of the ingredients of butter flavoring were more likely to have abnormal airflow. Laboratory experiments showed that rats that breathed high concentrations of vapors from the butter flavoring developed significant airway damage to their lungs. NIOSH is not aware of any evidence to suggest a hazard to consumers in the preparation and consumption of microwave popcorn.

Since the beginning of the Joplin investigation, NIOSH has opened health hazard investigations at five additional popcorn producing plants: 2 in Nebraska, and one each in Iowa, Illinois, and Ohio. Further research is needed to conclusively identify the cause and the circumstances under which the risk occurs. These efforts will enable the development of guidelines for safe occupational use of flavorings by all companies.



New on DVD: Ways to Reduce Job-Related Stress

Working With Stress is the first NIOSH training and educational program on the topic of workplace stress. The program, available on DVD and VHS, describes workplace factors that can create or exacerbate worker stress and suggests practical measures for reducing job-related stress through changes in work organization. Working With Stress is designed to serve as a resource for employers, managers, occupational health and safety professionals, workers, and educators. To date, over 4,000 copies have been requested.



The Working With Stress DVD and VHS are companion pieces to the 1999 NIOSH document, Stress...At Work. Nearly 92,000 copies of Stress...At Work have been distributed.

You can visit the program's website at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/video/stressdvd1002.html>

NIOSH Homeland Security Update: Additional Respirators for Emergency Responders Approved

In January 2003, NIOSH approved the Scott Model Air-Pak 4.5 respirator and the Interspiro Models Spirotek S3 9030, 6630, and 4530 respirators for occupational use by emergency responders against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) agents. The approvals are NIOSH's latest actions in a key program for protecting emergency responders from the risk of injury, illness, or death in the event of a potential terrorist attack. These devices are open-circuit, pressure-demand self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA) that provide users with air from a pressurized cylinder or tank carried on the back. The NIOSH approval signifies the products can protect fire fighters and other responders from CBRN exposures in the line of duty. NIOSH tested and evaluated the devices under criteria announced in December 2001. In May 2002, the Interspiro Spiromatic Models 9030, 6630, and 4530 became the first to be granted certification by NIOSH under the new program. NIOSH continues to test and evaluate other SCBAs submitted by manufacturers for certification.



NIOSH UPDATE - Scott Model Air-Pak 4.5 respirator

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/scottairupd.html>

NIOSH UPDATE - Interspiro Models Spirotek S3 9030, 6630, and 4530 respirators

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/inter20703.html>

World Trade Center Searchers from Ohio to Get NIOSH Funded Screening

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the 74 members of the Ohio Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue Team went to New York to assist in rescue efforts. The workers were exposed to a complex mix of potentially toxic substances, including asbestos, acid fumes, heavy metals and smoke from burnt materials. After returning home, half of those workers reported suffering health problems, ranging from sinus infections to pneumonia. Many were also more concerned about long-term cancer risks and other potential problems, which could take 15 to 20 years to develop. Under a new NIOSH funded screening program, these workers, and the estimated 9,000 other workers who were directly involved in rescue and cleanup efforts, are eligible for free medical screenings at the Mt. Sinai Occupational and Environmental Medicine Center.

Mt. Sinai Announces Preliminary Results of NIOSH-funded WTC Screening

Mt. Sinai Occupational and Environmental Medicine Center recently announced (January 27, 2003) preliminary data from its NIOSH-funded screening of an initial sample of World Trade Center rescue and recovery workers. Results from the screenings found that 52 percent of workers still suffered from ear, nose and throat ailments, 46 percent showed pulmonary symptoms and 52 percent reported mental health problems, like post-traumatic stress disorder. These findings are based on a random sample of 250 individuals from the first 500 workers screened under this new program. Since the screening program began in July, Mt. Sinai has examined more than 3,500 workers and expects to screen some 9,000 workers.

NIOSH Provides New Leads on Preventing Fourth-Leading Cause of Death

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is the fourth-leading cause of death in the U.S. Reducing occupational COPD will significantly reduce the nation's burden of COPD overall. A new NIOSH study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology provides new leads for focused research and interventions to reduce work-related COPD. From a representative sample of the U.S. adult population, the study identifies industries and occupations in which workers have a high prevalence of COPD, and the fraction of those cases attributable to work-related exposures. Results showed 19% of COPD cases in the US population can be attributable to work in industries that pose a risk for these illnesses. Among those workers who have never smoked, the proportion was much higher at 31%. As far as NIOSH is aware, this study was the first to generate, from U.S. population statistics, estimates on the contribution of work-related exposures to the prevalence of COPD in the U.S. The study was published in the October 15, 2002, issue of American Journal of Epidemiology.

NIOSH Studies Point to Ways of Preventing Fatal Jobs Falls from Roofs

In 1998, approximately 372 construction workers died and 21,081 were seriously injured in falls from elevation. Losing balance is one of the triggering events for fall incidents in roof construction. To better understand the factors contributing to loss of balance when working at heights, three projects have been developed by NIOSH, two of which have been completed.

Results from the first project indicated that the roof-environment characteristics, height, and sloped support surface synergistically increased workers' standing postural instability. This increased instability was not adequately recognized by the

workers. Additionally, the use of vertical poles of planks in close proximity to a worker can serve as a visual frame of reference and improve balance at elevation. The second study results demonstrated that simulations of elevated environments within a surround screen virtual reality (SSVR) system can be useful for studying human performance at elevation to understand the risk factors leading to fall incidents.

The third study evaluates the impact of footwear on balance control, recognizing that at elevation workers rely heavily on sensory information from their feet to maintain balance. Upon completion of this study, researchers expect to demonstrate that improvements in footwear selection and design will directly benefit construction workers by reducing the risk of loss of balance incidents and fall injuries.



NORAlert

The increasing diversity of the U.S. work force means that more and more older people, women, teen, minorities, new immigrants, and other populations with unique characteristics are on the job than ever before. Such diversity is the lifeblood of modern business, but it also means that these special populations face unique risks for job-related injury and illness. The Spring 2003 (Volume Six) issue of NORA News casts a spotlight on efforts by NIOSH and its many partners to advance new research to address concerns through the NORA (National Occupational Research Agenda) Team on Special Populations at Risk. Also in the Spring 2003 issue: other notable recent accomplishments in NORA priority areas, and upcoming conferences and research efforts.

<http://www2.cdc.gov/nora/newsletters/pdfs/nnewsspr03.pdf>.

New From the NIOSH Press

“A Compendium of NIOSH Health Care Worker Research 2001” lists, for the first time in one document, all of NIOSH’s research programs and projects aimed at better preventing job-related injuries and illnesses among employees in health care, the second fastest growing sector of the U.S. economy. This is an essential reference for anyone interested in current research to help prevent occupational exposures to blood-borne pathogens, musculoskeletal injuries, latex allergies, work stress, and other health and safety concerns for health care workers (NIOSH Publication No. 2003-108).

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2003-108/2003108pd.html>

“Proceedings of the International Fishing Industry Safety and Health Conference” compiles all of the presentations made at a historic October 2000 NIOSH co-sponsored meeting of experts from industry, labor, and government to advance occupational safety in commercial fishing. The proceedings offer the latest research on approaches that work for preventing injuries and deaths in this demanding work setting. They also suggest areas of partnership for new research to achieve further progress (NIOSH Publication No. 2003-102).

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2003-102/2003102pd.html>.

To receive NIOSH documents or more information about occupational safety and health topics, contact NIOSH:

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or visit the NIOSH Web site at www.cdc.gov/niosh

Web Sightings

Reducing Hazardous Silica Dust Exposure: A Bigger and Better Web Resource

NIOSH's redesigned topic page on silica offers a structured, expanded online resource for locating information on preventing work-related illnesses linked to occupational exposure to silica dust. The redesigned topic page makes it easier and faster for users to find information about silica dust also known as respirable crystalline silica, which poses a risk of silicosis, an irreversible but preventable disease for 1.7 million workers who are exposed to silica dust in a variety of occupations and industries.

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/silica/default.html>.

Emergency Preparedness: Recommendations and Resources

What emergency precautions will better protect employees in your place of business from injury and illness in the event of a terrorist incident? Where can you find information? NIOSH's new topic page for emergency preparedness for businesses provides online resources on the topics of business emergency management planning and facility protection. Information on emergency contacts, NIOSH research and recommendations, and links to other preparedness resources are also available. Information contained on the topic page comes from documents developed by NIOSH and CDC, other federal agencies and national organizations, like the American Red Cross. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/prepared>.

Sound Guidance on Preventing Hearing Loss

Hearing loss from exposure to noise is incurable. Fortunately, it is also preventable. NIOSH's expanded and redesigned topic page on hearing loss prevention provides key information and resources for noise control and hearing conservation in the workplace. The web address is

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise>.

Upcoming Events

NORA Symposium: Working Partnerships-Research to Practice – June 23-24, 2003

The fourth bi-annual National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) Symposium will be held June 23-24, 2003 at the Hilton Crystal City, near Washington DC. The conference will convene several hundred occupational safety and health researchers, stakeholders, and policymakers from the public and private sectors to review progress in the implementation of the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA). An important aspect of this conference will be the scientific presentations addressing NORA priorities. This will be a unique forum for a broad cross-section of the occupational safety and health community to learn about the variety of research accomplished during seven years of NORA.

NOIRS 2003 - October 28-30, 2003

NIOSH, in association with its public and private sector partners, will host the third National Occupational Injury Research Symposium (NOIRS) on October 28-30, 2003 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This symposium is a means of implementing the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) for traumatic occupational injuries. Additionally, NOIRS will be a great source for developing collaborations, identifying best practices, and sharing innovative technological approaches to injury research and prevention. The symposium will consist of contributed oral presentations in concurrent sessions, organized sessions around topics of special interest, and poster presentations. For more information on NOIRS 2003, visit the NIOSH website <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/noirs/noirsmain.html>.

This newsletter is published monthly via email by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to inform members of the public health community as well as interested members of the general public of Institute related news, new publications, and updates on existing programs and initiatives.

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