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From the Director's Desk

Since the 1970s, occupational health professionals have made significant advancements in understanding the health risks of asbestos, and in identifying workplace populations at potential risk. In turn, those advancements have helped scientists and others to design interventions to protect working people from mesothelioma, asbestos disease, and other serious and often fatal illnesses.

NIOSH can take pride in the contributions that it has made to those advancements over the years.

Nevertheless, as we enter the 21st Century, many questions and uncertainties remain. For example, because several types and forms of mineral fibers are classified as asbestos, the scientific literature contains various inconsistencies in the definition and application of the term "asbestos" for defining and addressing potential health risks. Those inconsistencies reflect various scientific limitations that existed at the points in times in which given studies were reported, or given decisions were made.

In many cases, decisions made many years ago, reflecting the best scientific information then available, still form the basis of today's public policies. Because these issues are so complex, and because competing demands for attention to other scientific questions always exist, it has been difficult for scientists and others to make a systematic effort to re-examine longstanding policies in light of today's scientific knowledge.

Uncertainty is never a desirable factor when people's health is at issue. For that reason, NIOSH will undertake a major initiative this year to engage the current questions about asbestos in light of today's technical capabilities and scientific knowledge. We will seek ideas and input from our diverse partners to help define the pressing questions about asbestos and other mineral fibers, to identify new scientific advancements that may be brought to bear on those questions, and to lay out a roadmap for the research most likely to bring certainty out of uncertainty.

We will announce further details of this initiative in the coming weeks, with additional information to come in the March issue of NIOSH eNews. We look forward to your interest and participation.

NY Seeks Information on WTC Responder Deaths

In an initiative funded by NIOSH, the New York State Department of Health is collecting information on deaths among World Trade Center responders, recovery workers, and volunteers. This data collection system will be used to identify and track all fatalities that occur among WTC responders so that science-based investigations of root causes can begin to be explored. Further information, including a mailing address, a toll-free telephone number, and an email address for contacting the program, is available at http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/investigations/wtc/health_studies/fatality_investigation.htm.

NIOSH Announces “WorkLife 2007: Protecting and Promoting Worker Health, A National Symposium”

NIOSH announces "WorkLife 2007: Protecting and Promoting Worker Health, A National Symposium." This Symposium, sponsored by NIOSH in conjunction with over 25 supporting organizations, will explore strategies and acquire tools for enhancing and sustaining healthy workplaces and healthy workers. The two-day symposium is part of NIOSH's WorkLife Initiative and will be held September 10-11 at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, Maryland. For more information go to <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/worklife/>.

Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders in Sonographers

A new NIOSH Workplace Solutions publication highlights the risks for sonographers developing work-related musculoskeletal disorders, an injury that accounts for one-third of all occupational injuries and illnesses reported by employers. NIOSH provides recommendations that include appropriate engineering controls, work practices, hazard communication, and training to prevent these work-related musculoskeletal disorders. To view the full publication, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/wp-solutions/2006-148/>.

IOM Report on NIOSH Anthropometric Research

The Institute of Medicine released an assessment report on a NIOSH head-and-face anthropometric study of U.S. respirator users. This is the result of a NIOSH effort to update data on facial shapes and sizes of a representative U.S. population, so that information used to set criteria for fit-testing of respirator face masks accurately reflects the characteristics of today's increasingly diverse workforce. The IOM review committee found the results to be an advancement over data and criteria that have been used since the 1970s, but offers recommendations for changes to address what the committee characterized as weaknesses in the study. To view the entire report, go to <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3740/28457/39829.aspx>.

National Academy Review of the Occupational Energy Research Program

A National Academies committee issued its final report on January 3, of its review of the Worker and Public Health Activities Program sponsored by the Department of Energy and conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services. The committee made several recommendations for improving the NIOSH program and enhancing communications to workers and the public. NIOSH is grateful to the committee for its work in reviewing NIOSH activities under the program, and is carefully reviewing the recommendations. The final report, "Review of the Worker and Public Health Activities Program Administered by the Department of Energy and the Department of Health and Human Services," is available at no cost from the National Academies Press or go to <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/oerp/news.html>.

Contributions in Engineering, Statistics Noted in MMWR

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* for December 22, 2006, Volume 55 (SUP02), includes two feature articles written by NIOSH researchers.

- "Engineering and Public Health at CDC" (pp. 10-13) discusses the role of NIOSH engineers and other engineers at CDC, and key engineering contributions to public health. The full article can be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su5502a5.htm>
- "Statistics and Public Health at CDC" (pp. 22-24) discusses how the integration of statistics and analytic techniques into public health research is a critical asset to NIOSH and to CDC, and how it has resulted in important applications in various disciplines, including epidemiology, economics, and the behavioral and social sciences. The full article can be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su5502a9.htm>

Ergonomic Patent for a Wearable Kneel-Sit Support Device

On December 26, 2006, three NIOSH employees received U.S. Patent Number 7,152,919 for the "Wearable Kneel-Sit Support Device." Developed by Steve Wurzelbacher (former employee), Ova Johnston (deceased), and Steve Hudock, the device is a product of research on ergonomic interventions in the shipbuilding and repair industries. Researchers observed that many shipyard employees spent a large percentage of time in kneeling to perform cutting, grinding, or welding tasks at floor or deck level. Also, an uncharacteristically high rate of lower extremity injuries and disorders was noted. This device is worn on the lower calf just above the worker's boot and, when kneeling, the worker can deploy the device to create a support for the back of the thighs. Sitting back on the support results in less [hyperflexion](#) of the knee than without the device. For more information, contact Steve Hudock at shudock@cdc.gov.



"Kneel-Sit" device deployed



Close-up of "Kneel-Sit" device components



Close-up of deployed "Kneel-Sit" device

Update from the NIOSH National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory

NIOSH Lab Director Appointed NFPA Committee Chair

Leslie Board, Director of the NIOSH National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory, was appointed the chairperson for the Technical Correlating Committee (TCC) on Fire and Emergency Services Protective Clothing and Equipment at the January National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards Council meeting. A member of the TCC since April 2004 and of the NFPA Technical Committee on Respiratory Protection Equipment since January 2002, Les brings a broad background on the diverse PPE issues for emergency responders.



NPPTL Releases December 2006 Figures on the Respirator Certification and Approval Process

During December 2006, the Technology Evaluation Branch of NPPTL closed a total of 47 projects. There were 33 respirator approval decisions, 4 denials and 2 applications were withdrawn by the manufacturer. Of these, 8 were new products, 30 were modifications of products that had been previously approved and 2 were Certified Product Investigations. During the month of December TEB received 17 applications for extensions of approval and 13 applications for new approvals.

The Engineering Evaluation team conducted two quality assurance manual audits to evaluate the quality assurance process and manufacturing practices. Two product audits were initiated. The Certified Product Investigation Process completed 2 evaluations of previously certified products.

One new approval and 2 modifications of approval were for CBRN respirators.

	September 2006	October 2006	November 2006	December 2006
Total number of product approvals	26	26	27	34
New products	9	7	16	8
Modifications to products previously approved	17	19	8	30
Air-supplied respirators	4	8	11	12
Air-purifying respirators	21	21	33	32
Respirators with protection from Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Agents (CBRN)	1	0	9	
Other Tasks Completed				
Site Audits	1			1
Product Audits	2	0		2
Certified Product Investigation Process (CPIP)	5	2	3	3
Quality Assurance		2	3	2
New Product Approval Granted	9	5	4	3
New Product Approval Denied	9	1	12	5
Product modification approval granted	17	16	6	22
Product modification approval denied		1	2	6 2 withdrawn
Audits Initiated				
Site audit	1	2	2	11
Product audit	0			1
Certified Product Investigation Process (CPIP)	3		3	5

NORA

National Occupational Research Agenda Sector Council Co-Chairs

NIOSH is excited by the great progress of the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) Sector Councils. Most of the councils have already held their initial meetings and started the process of drafting their strategic plans for researching occupational safety and health issues in their sectors. NORA agenda-setting depends heavily on volunteer occupational safety and health leaders from outside NIOSH as well as NIOSH personnel. Every NORA Sector Council will be lead by co-chairs, a NIOSH sector program leader, and a stakeholder representative. Feel free to contact them or the NIOSH program contact below regarding Council activities. Additionally, you can contact the NORA Coordinator about any NORA topic at NORACoordinator@cdc.gov.

Sector Council or Sub Council	Stakeholder Co-Chair	NIOSH sector contact
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	Barbara Lee Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation	Brad Husberg BHusberg@cdc.gov
Construction	Pete Stafford Center to Protect Worker Rights	Matt Gillen MGillen@cdc.gov
Healthcare and Social Assistance	Bonnie Rogers The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Teri Palermo TPalermo@cdc.gov
Manufacturing	Gordon Reeve Ford Motor Company (Retired)	Mike Gressel MGressel@cdc.gov
Mining	To be announced	Jeff Welsh JWelsh@cdc.gov
Services Public Safety Sub Council	Eileen Storey University of Connecticut Bill Johnson National Association of Police Organizations	David Utterback Dutterback@cdc.gov
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	To be announced	Stephanie Pratt SPratt@cdc.gov
Wholesale and Retail Trade	James Koskan Supervalu, Inc.	Vern Anderson VAnderson@cdc.gov

NIOSH Announces Funding Opportunities

Childhood Agricultural Safety and Health Research:

NIOSH will soon be reviewing grant applications for research to develop and evaluate new or existing enhanced control technologies that will reduce injury to youth exposed to farm hazards, to identify and implement strategies which encourage adults to adopt injury control methods to protect youth, and to identify the economic and social consequences of youth working on farms. For more information go to <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-OH-07-002.html>.

Centers for Agricultural Disease and Injury Research, Education, and Prevention

NIOSH will soon be reviewing cooperative agreement applications submitted for Agriculture Centers that conduct research, education, and prevention/intervention programs to address agricultural safety and health problems both regionally and nationally. For more information go to <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-06-057.html>.

For additional information please contact Dr. Allen Robison at 404-498-2509 or WRobison@cdc.gov.

News from Our Partners

Release of the Global Risks 2007 Report

The second "Global Risks Annual Report," published by the World Economic Forum in cooperation with Citigroup, Marsh & McLennan Companies, Swiss Re, and the Wharton Risk Center, was released in January. The report found major improvements in the understanding of the interdependencies between global risks, the importance of taking an integrated risk management approach to global challenges, and the necessity of dealing proactively with root causes of global risks rather than reacting to the consequences. It also suggests that many of the 23 core global risks have worsened over the last 12 months, despite growing awareness of their potential impacts. In addition to specific risk mitigation measures, the report also found that institutional innovations may be needed to create effective responses to a complex risk landscape. The full report can be downloaded at http://www.weforum.org/pdf/CSI/Global_Risks_2007.pdf.

Communication Products

NIOSH releases four new Health Hazard Evaluation Reports

Health Care and Social Assistance Sector

Evaluation of exposure to surgical smoke in the health care and social assistance sector. NIOSH investigators responded to three requests for health hazard evaluations in hospital operating rooms. The requesters were concerned about possible health effects from exposure to the byproducts of surgical smoke generated by electrocautery knives. NIOSH investigators tested the air for volatile organic compounds and surveyed employees about health symptoms. Although exposures to chemical compounds above the permitted or recommended limits were not identified, low concentrations of compounds found in surgical smoke may be sufficient to cause irritative effects on the eyes and mucous membranes, especially in sensitive individuals. The full reports are available at

- <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2001-0066-3019.pdf>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2001-0030-3020.pdf>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2000-0402-3021.pdf>

Services Sector

Evaluation of mold exposure in the services sector. NIOSH investigators responded to an employee request for a health hazard evaluation concerning symptoms that workers believed may have been related to exposure to mold and fungus in the treatment rooms and gas released from pools at a resort spa. NIOSH investigators found elevated moisture levels and mold growth behind some walls and above some ceilings. Recommendations by NIOSH investigators included removing the mold and taking steps to prevent new growth and implementing an indoor environmental quality management plan. The full report is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2004-0005-3024.pdf>.

Four New Mining Products Are Now Available

NIOSH released the following mining publications:

- Self-Contained Self-Rescuer Long Term Field Evaluation: Combined Eighth and Ninth Phase Results, NIOSH Report of Investigation 9671, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2007-103. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/pubs/pubreference/outputid2120.htm>
- A Method to Characterize Risk Associated With Mine Roof Conditions, NIOSH Technology News 520, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2007-104. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/pubs/pubreference/outputid2151.htm>
- Equipment Noise and Worker Exposure in the Coal Mining Industry, NIOSH Information Circular 9492, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2007-105. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/pubs/pubreference/outputid2232.htm>
- Blast Area Security: Flyrock Safety, NIOSH Technology News 522, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2007-112. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/pubs/pubreference/outputid2207.htm>

Look for Us

- Construction Safety Conference and Exposition, February 13-14, Rosemont, Illinois (Chicago), NIOSH booth #512
- 2007 SME Annual Meeting & Exhibit and 109th National Western Mining Conference, February 25-28, Denver, Colorado, NIOSH booth #1123

Mark Your Calendars: Important Paper and Poster Submission Deadlines

- Association of Occupational Health Professionals 2007 National Conference
September 26-29, 2007, Savannah, Georgia
Call for Posters deadline is February 15, 2007
<http://www.aohp.org>
- Occupational and Environmental Exposures of Skin to Chemicals
June 17-20, 2007, Golden, Colorado
Call for Papers deadline is February 17, 2007
http://www.mines.edu/outreach/cont_ed/oeesc
- European Respiratory Society Annual Congress 2007
September 15-19, 2007, Stockholm, Sweden
Call for Papers deadline is February 22, 2007
<http://www.ersnet.org/ers/default.aspx>

Word of the Month

Hyperflexion: Bending a limb or a body part beyond its normal range..

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