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### **From the Director's Desk**

**--Christine M. Branche, Ph.D., Acting Director, NIOSH  
May eNews 2009**

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### **Supporting the Frontline**

From the daily headlines and news broadcasts, we're familiar with the aggressive actions that the public-health community has taken to address the outbreak of the 2009 Novel Influenza A H1N1 Virus Infection (swine flu). In many instances, where the level of risk is low, the recommended safeguards involve commonly used practices, such as hand washing, using hand sanitizers, and covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing. A higher level of protection may be recommended for workers at higher risk due to work-related risk factors. This would include, for example, the use of respirators rated N95 for health-care employees treating confirmed or suspected cases, or flight crews assisting ill persons from areas where cases have occurred.

When we get sick, or when the threat of serious illness looms, we expect that physicians will be there to treat us, that nurses will provide care, and that hospitals and clinics will operate efficiently. During the uncertainty of an outbreak, we depend on essential services being maintained by police officers, emergency medical technicians, security personnel, and other workers whose jobs unavoidably involve ongoing contact with the public. None of this can happen if those on whom we rely are incapacitated by illness, so addressing occupational risks is essential.

In addressing those risks, it is important that scientists, public-health professionals, health-care providers, and policy-makers understand the appropriate levels of protection for diverse work environments, and recognize the dynamics of the workplace that influence worker protection. Appropriate recommendations for protection require knowing the technical capabilities of personal protective equipment, and knowing the procedures that must be followed for effective use of that equipment. There also needs to be ongoing communication so that the concerns of the occupational health stakeholder community are addressed in

larger national response planning, and reliable, timely information in turn is relayed back to those partners. NIOSH is proud to help meet these worker needs during the current H1N1 outbreak, as it did in the earlier national responses to SARS and the devastation from Hurricane Katrina.

In particular, the current national public health mobilization highlights the need for effective, reliable personal protective equipment to meet the potential threat of pandemic illness and other emerging concerns for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace. NIOSH and its partners have worked together diligently to address these challenges. Specifically regarding preparedness for use of personal protective equipment by health-care workers in the event of a pandemic, NIOSH asked the Institute of Medicine to examine this critically important area in 2005, and to provide recommendations. The IOM responded with a September 2007 report that offered recommendations for NIOSH and other partners for research and policy actions in three critical areas: 1) Understanding influenza transmission, 2) Committing to worker safety and appropriate use of personal protective equipment, and 3) Innovation and strengthening of personal protective equipment design, testing and certification. The IOM described NIOSH's role as a leader to facilitate action by the global community and as an implementer to carry out research and other actions addressed in the recommendations. Last year, NIOSH prepared a draft Health Care Worker (HCW) Action Plan in response to the IOM recommendations, and engaged public comment on the plan through a stakeholder meeting and a public docket. A final draft action plan, the IOM report, and other materials are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docket/NIOSHdocket0129.html>.

NIOSH is using the HCW Action Plan as part of larger planning to set priorities in its overall personal protective technology (PPT) program, and to select future initiatives, in the context of funding, staffing, and laboratory technical capabilities. NIOSH's strategic planning to anticipate and address broad personal protective equipment needs for 21<sup>st</sup> Century workers has also involved extensive stakeholder input and review by the National Academies. The draft PPT Implementation Plan to address the recommendations of the National Academies' evaluation of the PPT Program describes an approach to address the broader needs of all workers, and is available here: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/ppt/PPTProgResp.html>. The public comment period on the draft PPT Implementation Plan is open until June 1, 2009.

Designing research to address occupational threats from emerging infectious diseases is a tremendously challenging task. As the events of the past week demonstrate, it is also extremely important. Success depends on effective partnerships, and so we encourage new partners to join us, and we also welcome suggestions for expanding our existing collaborations.

In the meantime, for continuing information and guidance on occupational health issues associated with the H1N1 influenza virus, please bookmark our NIOSH topic page, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/H1N1flu/>.

## **NIOSH H1N1 Influenza Virus Resource Page**

The NIOSH H1N1 Influenza Virus (Swine Flu) web page addresses occupational health issues associated with the exposure or infection to the virus. NIOSH provides technical guidance for workers, including health-care and transportation workers, for whom job-related questions about exposure or infection may be an occupational concern. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/H1N1flu/>.

## **Newspaper Wins Pulitzer for Occupational Safety and Health Reporting**

NIOSH congratulates the staff of the *Las Vegas Sun* on winning the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. The newspaper won the award for its reporting on the high death rate among construction workers on the Las Vegas strip. NIOSH is delighted to see the recognition of journalism covering occupational safety and health. <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/topics/construction-deaths/>.

## **NIOSH Strategic Management Highlighted in 'Governance' Article**

In a new journal article, former NIOSH Director John Howard, M.D., discusses NIOSH's strategic management initiatives over the past decade. The initiatives, Howard writes, are a case study in "managing for performance" by public health science agencies in an era of increasing complexity of challenges and dwindling resources. The article, "Informing Public Health Policy and Practice: The Strategic Management of Research Processes and Organizations," was published in the April 2009 issue of *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* (Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 203-216). An abstract is posted online at <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122280761/abstract>.

## **NIOSH Updates Guidance on Protection Against Biological Agents Exposure**

NIOSH recently updated its "Recommendations for the Selection and Use of Respirators and Protective Clothing for Protection Against Biological Agents." The update reflects knowledge and experience gained since the document was developed 8 years ago. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2009-132/>.

## **Videos and Presentations Now Available from February Global Road Safety Conference**

Videos and presentations from the International Conference on Road Safety at Work, which was held from February 16-18, 2009 in Washington DC, are now available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/twu/global/>.

## **NIOSH Research Influential In Evaluation of Carcinogens**

Cancer due to workplace exposures is an important research priority for NIOSH. In March, NIOSH researchers participated in a reevaluation by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the evidence for the carcinogenicity of 10 metals, particles, and fibers, including arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium(VI), nickel compounds, crystalline silica, leather dust, wood dust, and asbestos. All 10 agents were reaffirmed as known human carcinogens, and specific cancer types known to be caused by these agents were identified (Straif K, et al. *Lancet Oncology* 10(5):453-454, 2009). NIOSH studies were influential in the evaluation of beryllium, crystalline silica, asbestos, and chromium(VI). For more information, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/crcd/>.

## **Nominations Now Being Accepted for "Safe in Sound" Award**

NIOSH and the National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA) are accepting nominations for the 2010 "Safe in Sound" award, which is given to companies or organizations that exemplify Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention. Nominations will be accepted until August 1, 2009. Additional information and submission details can be found at <http://www.safeinsound.us>.

## **NIOSH Responds to Navy's Request for Industrial Hygiene Session at Conference**

NIOSH developed an Industrial Hygiene session at the Navy's request for the 48<sup>th</sup> Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Conference. The session featured nine NIOSH presentations on research activities related to chemical exposures of the skin, occupational contact dermatitis, personal protective equipment (PPE), nanotechnology, control banding, and Prevention through Design. For more information contact Scott Dotson at [scott.dotson@cdc.hhs.gov](mailto:scott.dotson@cdc.hhs.gov).

## **Partners Wanted to Collaborate on Industrial Hygiene Projects**

NIOSH's Industry Wide Studies Branch is in need of partnerships with facilities willing to provide site access for conducting exposure assessment studies of the following agents. Interested companies should contact the following project officers for more information.

2,2'-Dithiobisbenzanilide (CAS# 135-57-9, DTBBA, a plasticizer), Steve Wurzelbacher, [swurzelbacher@cdc.gov](mailto:swurzelbacher@cdc.gov)

2-Methoxy-4-nitroaniline (CAS# 97-52-9, 2M4Na, a dye), Dennis Roberts, [DRRoberts@cdc.gov](mailto:DRRoberts@cdc.gov)

Diacetyl in food production, (CAS# 431-03-8), Brian Curwin, [bcurwin@cdc.gov](mailto:bcurwin@cdc.gov)

Manganese compounds in welding fume, Kevin Hanley, [Khanley@cdc.gov](mailto:Khanley@cdc.gov)

## **NIOSH Seeks Comments on the Following:**

### **Draft Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Plan**

NIOSH requests public comment on the draft Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Program plan, to implement the National Academies Program Evaluation Recommendations. Deadline for comments is May 22, 2009 <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/review/public/164/>.

### **Addressing Needs for Future Respirator Research**

Public comment on the **Draft Personal Protective Technology Implementation Plan** will be taken until June 1, 2009. The comments will help ensure that NIOSH has identified stakeholder needs for new research on respirators and other types of personal protective equipment in the twenty-first century workplace, and they will help confirm the research plan will be effective in meeting those needs.

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/review/public/146/>.

### **Process for Updating the List of Hazardous Drugs**

NIOSH is requesting comment on proposed additions and deletions to the list of hazardous drugs for the NIOSH Alert on Antineoplastic and Other Hazardous Drugs in Health Care Settings. Deadline for comments is June 30, 2009 <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/review/public/105-a/>

## Summer School Focuses on Workplaces as Teaching Platforms

The 9th European Association of Schools of Occupational Medicine (EASOM) summer school will be held August 27-29, 2009 in Linz, Austria. The theme for the course is "workplaces as teaching platforms." For more information, go to <http://www.ppm.at/easomsummerschool2009/>

## NIOSH Congratulates the Following Award Recipients

Former NIOSH Branch Chief John Hankinson received the 2009 American Thoracic Society Public Service Award for outstanding contributions in the public health arena related to respiratory disease and medicine.

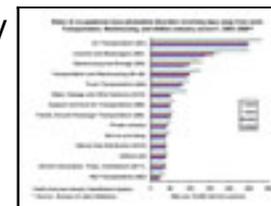
NIOSH researchers Scott Brueck and John Gibbins received an award of excellence for their work in investigating an outbreak of neurological illness associated with pork abattoir workers. The CDC, Public Health Epidemiology and Laboratory Research Group presented the award.

The NIOSH Division of Applied Research and Technology, Engineering and Physical Hazards Branch received the 2009 Society of American Military Engineers Cumming Plaque for outstanding contributions in public health engineering and science.

## Morbidity and Mortality @Work

### MSD Rates in 3 Sectors Exceed Private Industry Averages

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are an important problem and account for approximately one third of all non fatal injuries. The rate of occupational musculoskeletal disorders in private industry decreased during the 5-year period 2003 to 2007. However, three industry sectors reported rates that exceeded the overall private industry averages by at least 25%: Transportation and Warehousing, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Construction. See chart for more details. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/enews/enews7n1chart.html>.



## News from Our Partners

## New Mexico Farmworker Pesticide Exposure Survey

In the New Mexico border region, 202 farmworkers took surveys on their experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and practices related to pesticide exposures. The surveys were given by promotoras (community health workers) contracted through the Southern Area Health Education Center. Survey responses indicate that Pesticide exposure prevention training is effective in promoting knowledge and influencing some behaviors. Only 32% of the women who responded had received any sort of pesticide exposure prevention training versus 57% of the men surveyed. A resource list of pesticide exposure prevention training programs will be made available for employers and workers. More information is available at <http://www.health.state.nm.us/eheb/OccuInfo.html>

## George Washington University Student Wins Award for Taxi Driver Health Study

GWU Environmental and Occupational Health graduate student Rebecca Reindel received “Best Poster Presentation” for her project on “New York City Taxis: Worker Input as a Tool to Assess Vehicle Design and Driver Health.” This award was given as part of the GWU 14th Annual Research Day Program. <http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/about/news.cfm?view=news&d=8264>.

## R2p corner

### NIOSH Seeks Partners



NIOSH is interested in identifying partners to help commercialize the QuickFit earplug device and move it into the workplace. This simple, inexpensive, handheld device lets earplug users easily check the fit of their earplugs and test the effectiveness of the earplugs against potentially hazardous noise. More information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/pubs/pubreference/outputid3060.htm>, or contact Bob Randolph ([RRandolph@cdc.gov](mailto:RRandolph@cdc.gov)).

## NORA

### National Services Agenda Available

The National Services Agenda is now available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/>. The agenda is expected to evolve based on additional input and evaluation and as its goals are accomplished. Contact the NORA Coordinator ([noracoordinator@cdc.gov](mailto:noracoordinator@cdc.gov)) with any questions, suggestions, or to join others



to work on these goals.

## **NIOSH Science Blog**

### **Health and Safety In The Horse Racing Industry**

Share your thoughts with us and others on the NIOSH Science Blog. The current discussion is on safety and health in the horse-racing industry.

[http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/blog/nsb050109\\_horseracing.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/blog/nsb050109_horseracing.html).

## **Communication Products**

### **New Bicycle Seats Shown to Be Effective**

This new NIOSH publication summarizes the findings of NIOSH studies that demonstrated the effectiveness of new saddles (seats) for the nearly 40,000 workers in public safety occupations who ride bicycles while working <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/updates/upd-04-22-09.html>.

### **Protecting Healthcare Workers from TB**

This NIOSH publication offers new technical guidance for using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) systems to help protect healthcare workers who may have an occupational risk of tuberculosis (TB) infection <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2009-105/>.

### **Power Tool Database Promotes Hearing Protection for Workers**

NIOSH recently released a Power Tool Database that can be used to find such information as sound power levels, sound pressure levels, and downloadable exposure and wave files related to commonly used power tools <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh-sound-vibration>.

### **New Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation Reports**

Fire Fighter – Emergency Medical Technician Suffers Sudden Cardiac Death After Multiple Emergency Responses – Massachusetts (F2008-23) <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face200823.html>

Paid on Call Fire Fighter Suffers a Fatal Cardiac Event Just after Completing Two Hose Training Drills – Wisconsin (F2008-19) <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face200819.html>

Career Fire Fighter Suffers Cardiac Arrest and Dies While Conducting Overhaul Operations at a Structure Fire - Missouri (F2008-18)

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face200818.html>

Fire Fighter Suffers a Heart Attack and Dies after Completing Work Capacity Test - Idaho (F2007-34)

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face200734.html>

## More Communication Products

To see other new NIOSH communication products, including documents and new and updated topic pages, go to the NIOSH “What’s New” page. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/whatsnew/>.

## Upcoming Conferences

A comprehensive list of upcoming conferences can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/exhibits.html>.

## [NIOSH eNews on the Web: www.cdc.gov/niosh/enews/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/enews/)

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