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

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

**June eNews 2009**

## **A Time For Change**

If you randomly asked a passerby to identify Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen, you might receive a blank stare in response. 'Wilhelm who?' Roentgen's name is not widely recognized, although his brainchild is well known. Roentgen was the German physicist who inadvertently discovered x-rays in 1895 and pioneered their use. This scientific advancement has had an incalculable impact. Among other applications, radiographs have been one of the fundamental tools to aid in diagnosing work-related lung diseases such as asbestosis, coal workers' pneumoconiosis (also known as black lung disease), and silicosis. More recently, x-rays have been used to perform computerized axial tomography scans of the chest to diagnose bronchiolitis obliterans (severe obstructive lung disease associated with occupational exposures to food flavorings).

NIOSH administers the long-standing federal program for health surveillance of underground coal miners to detect coal workers' pneumoconiosis. Under that program alone, more than 400,000 chest x-rays of miners have been taken since 1970. Those x-rays, stored in NIOSH's Morgantown, West Virginia facility, provide a unique historical record and an ongoing resource for researchers. They also serve as a reminder that we can never relax our vigilance against this terrible occupational disease.

Like other technologies from the last century that have since been overtaken by newer advancements, old-fashioned film-based radiographic imaging is being replaced by [digital imaging](#). For NIOSH, this offers exciting opportunities for advancing the basic tool of the Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program to keep pace with technological innovation. At the same time, it challenges us to make sure that the transition is orderly.

NIOSH is engaging our partners, both in the U.S. and abroad, to implement this transition. Engaging our international colleagues is important because NIOSH's system for classifying lung abnormalities identified through x-rays is based on a system developed by the International Labour Office (ILO). Maintaining harmony between the NIOSH and ILO systems is important for maintaining international consistency in interpreting radiographs.

This month the NIOSH science blog looks at the NIOSH transition to digital imaging. It addresses the advantages of modern digital imaging over film-based imaging, and the implications of a changeover for the NIOSH Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program. The coal industry continues to be a key component of the U.S. economy. Business, labor, government, and the medical community have a common interest in keeping miners healthy, and consequently helping to keep their families, their communities, and our nation strong. Please read more about the Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/surveillance/ords/CoalWorkersHealthSurvProgram.html> and please join this discussion on the blog <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2009/06/02/xray/> and offer your recommendations and comments for adapting digital imaging to meet the goals of the program. We look forward to serving the needs of our stakeholders in the 21st Century as diligently as we served them in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## **President's Budget Request for FY2010**

The President's budget for fiscal year 2010 proposes \$424 million for NIOSH—an \$8 million increase over FY09 funding. The proposed increase includes \$5 million for NIOSH's strategic research program on the occupational health and safety implications and applications of nanotechnology. More information can be found on page 36 of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Fiscal Year 2010 Budget in Brief at <http://www.hhs.gov/asrt/ob/docbudget/2010budgetinbrief.pdf>.

## **Fire/EMS Safety, Health, and Survival Week, June 14-20, 2009**

NIOSH once again supports the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Fire/EMS Safety, Health and Survival Week, June 14–20, 2009. The theme this year is *Protect Yourself: Your Safety, Health and Survival Are Your Responsibility*. NIOSH products from the Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program are included among the recommended resources for this fire fighter safety and health campaign. Fire departments are encouraged to use this week to review safety policies, correct safety deficiencies, provide training as needed, and evaluate the progress of efforts to improve fire fighter safety and health. More information is available at <http://www.iafc.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=306>.

## **New Podcast Addresses Workplace Health and Safety Issues for Women**

"Workplace Safety and Women" is the topic of a new podcast released by NIOSH and the CDC Office of Women's Health <http://www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11503%20>. This podcast focuses on four important issues for women at work: job stress, work schedules, reproductive health, and workplace violence. NIOSH researchers in both Morgantown and Cincinnati contributed to the podcast script that elaborates on how important each of these issues is for women in the work place. For more information go to <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/women/> or contact Dr. Naomi Swanson at [nws3@cdc.gov](mailto:nws3@cdc.gov) or 513-533-8165.

## **In Memoriam: NIOSH Researcher Dr. Paul Baron**

Friends and colleagues were saddened to learn of the death of Dr. Paul Baron on May 20, 2009, after a long battle with cancer. Paul worked in the Division of Applied Research and Technology in Cincinnati, Ohio. Over his 30-year career, Paul made many exceptional and unique contributions to the field of aerosol science and occupational safety and health. He was a pioneer in aerosol measurement and has led the area of occupational aerosol sampling. His work in asbestos sampling and analytical research has also garnered international recognition.

## **NIOSH Awards Contract for Support of EEOICPA Scientific Support Activities**

NIOSH awarded a contract for support of NIOSH's scientific support activities under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA) to a team led by Oak Ridge Associated Universities, based out of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ocas/pdfs/dr/pr050509.pdf>.

## **Share Your Workplace Safety and Health Global Success Stories With Us**

Have you been involved in a global collaboration activity related to workplace safety and health? If so, NIOSH would like to hear about it. Please email your stories to Maria Sofia Lioce-Mata at [MLiocemata@cdc.gov](mailto:MLiocemata@cdc.gov)

## NIOSH Receives WHO-PAHO Award

During the celebration of World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2009, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) gave NIOSH an award for its leadership and contributions to occupational safety and health in the region of the Americas. The theme this year was “protecting the health and safety of health care workers,” highlighting the importance that these workers have on improving public health.



*Maria Lioce-Mata and Jane Hingston receive the award on behalf of the NIOSH Global Collaboration Program from Luz Maritza Tennasse and Luiz Augusto Cassanha Galvão of PAHO*

## Janice Huy Awarded Prestigious Exemplary Service Medal

Janice Huy, deputy director of the NIOSH Office of Research and Technology Transfer, was recently awarded the Surgeon General's Exemplary Service Medal by Acting Surgeon General Steven K. Galson. Huy received this award in recognition of her four years of distinguished service as chief dietitian officer of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, in which she holds the rank of captain.



## "Safe in Sound" Award, Nominations Accepted through August 1, 2009

NIOSH and the National Hearing Conservation Association 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 Seeks Comments on the Following:**

### **Approval Tests and Standards for Closed-Circuit Escape Respirators**

NIOSH reopened the comment period for *Approval Tests and Standards for Closed-Circuit Escape Respirators*. Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until June 19, 2009. <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-11938.htm>

### **Quality Assurance Requirements for Respirators**

The comment period for proposed rulemaking on *Quality Assurance Requirements for Respirators* has been reopened. Comments will be accepted until October 9, 2009. <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-11947.htm>

### **Prevention through Design Plan for the National Initiative**

NIOSH is requesting comment on the draft *NIOSH Technical Report: Prevention through Design Plan*. Deadline for comments is August 22, 2009. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/review/public/160/>

### **Three New Health Hazard Evaluation (HHE) Reports Now Available**

The HHE Program evaluated ongoing concerns about a possible high rate of cancer among current and former employees in two office buildings at an aeronautics research center. Investigators found that 20 different types of cancer were diagnosed among the employees of the two buildings, but the different types of cancers did not suggest a common workplace exposure among those diagnosed. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2008-0166-3079.pdf>

The HHE Program evaluated potential exposures at a college’s sculpture studios. Investigators recommended that managers correct safety hazards in the studios and substitute a less toxic plastics adhesive that does not contain methylene chloride. To reduce exposure to welding fumes, it was recommended that adequate

outdoor and replacement air be supplied to the sculpture studios and local exhaust ventilation be installed in the metalworking studio.

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2007-0167-3078.pdf>

The HHE Program evaluated potential exposures to flour dust at a bakery. Investigators recommended that the facility use local exhaust or general ventilation to lower dust levels in the bakery and that employees use slow, smooth movements when handling powdered ingredients to keep dust levels low. Investigators also recommended that a vacuum or wet wash method be used to clean up powder used in the bakery.

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2005-0248-3077.pdf>

## **Morbidity and Mortality @Work**

Workplace safety and health issues of the self-employed and independent contractors have generated considerable interest within the research community. The data presented in this chart provides some perspective on the size of this workforce and the opportunities for research within each of the nine NORA sectors. For more details, see the chart at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/enews/enews7n2chart.html>.

## **News from Our Partners**

### **Heavy Metal Tests Reduce Exposure for Michigan Laboratory Workers**

Michigan released annual reports for 2007 and 2008 that demonstrate the utility of using lab reports for elevated arsenic, cadmium, or mercury tests for public health surveillance and intervention. The reports show that sources of most elevated levels were non-occupational. However, where cases have been identified with an elevated metal test, follow-ups to those workplaces have proved successful in identifying correctable problems and reducing exposure to fellow workers. The reports can be found at <http://www.oem.msu.edu/>.

### **Washington State Campaigning for Workplace Safety**

Beginning in May 2009, the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries began a television, radio, and Internet advertising campaign to raise awareness about the importance of workplace safety. The campaign is cosponsored by four business and labor organizations. Information about the ad campaign and resources for making the workplace safe are at <http://www.WorkSafe.Lni.wa.gov>.

### NIOSH Presents Research-to-Practice Awards



On May 7, NIOSH presented the Bullard-Sherwood Research-to-Practice Awards for excellence in occupational safety and health. This year the awards and honorable mention went to projects on developing an MBA course in occupational safety and health and addressing issues on aerial lifts, ambulances, protective clothing, and roof bolters. Congratulations to the 2009 recipients who are listed at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/awards/bullard-sherwood>.

### NORA

#### National Public Safety Sub-Sector Agenda



The National Public Safety Sub-Sector Agenda is now available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/>. The agenda highlights research and partnership goals to improve the safety and health of more than 3.5 million workers in law enforcement, corrections, emergency medical services, and firefighting, including many volunteers. 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

Share your thoughts with us and others on the NIOSH Science Blog. Current and planned discussions are on:

Solutions for Preventing Lead Poisoning and Hearing Loss at Indoor Firing Ranges  
<https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2009/05/18/firingrange/>

Using Digital Chest Images to Monitor the Health of Coal Miners and Other Workers  
<https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2009/06/02/xray/>

### Communication Products

## If You Missed It The First Time, Catch Up On 2008 NIOSH Research Now!

*The NIOSH Bibliography of Communication and Research Products 2008* includes journal articles, book chapters, numbered publications, abstracts/proceedings, control technology reports, fatality assessment and control evaluation reports, fire fighter fatality investigation and prevention reports, and more!

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2009-129/>

### New Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation Report

*After Conducting Fire Suppression Duties at a Structure Fire, Captain Collapses in Incident Scene Rehabilitation—Kansas.* <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face200733.html>

### More...

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>.

### Word of the Month

**Digital Imaging**—A form of x-ray imaging that captures images by using digital x-ray sensors rather than traditional photographic film.

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

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