

# Wholesale and Retail Trade

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE FOR A SAFE FUTURE

July 2020

*“Three Rules of Work: Out of clutter find simplicity. From discord find harmony. In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”  
-Albert Einstein*

## Member spotlight!



Dr. Kermit Davis, Co-Chair of the NORA Wholesale and Retail Trade Sector Council, is the Immediate-President of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES). He became a Fellow of HFES in 2013 and American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) in 2019. Dr. Davis is the graduate

program director of the Environmental and Occupational Hygiene and Occupational Safety and Ergonomics programs at the University of Cincinnati. His WRT research has concentrated on the effectiveness interventions to reduce loads on the spine.

## Activities in NORA WRT



On January 17, we held an online NORA Wholesale and Retail Trade Sector Council meeting. Our guest speaker was James J. Galante, the Director of Business Development for Southworth Products Corp. He presented on “The Bad Ergonomics of Order Fulfillment and Stocking in the Retail Industry and what to do about it.”

This engaging presentation, filled with stories and examples, addressed ways to implement better manual handling devices throughout the process of order fulfillment and stocking in the retail industry. Use of manual handling devices can improve ergonomics, reduce stress on the employee, and increase efficiency and productivity. Many millions of goods are moved through warehouses and distribution centers and placed on retail shelves every day. This

labor-intensive task has changed little over the years. Merchandise is collected on pallets and shipped to the back room of stores, where the merchandise is often transferred to carts and then finally from carts to store shelves. The display shelves have grown in height and goods are more densely packed. In addition, the cardboard and plastic packaging for those goods has changed, such as thinner cardboard or plastic wrapping, often contributing to worker challenges. Health issues, such as obesity, and an aging workforce create challenges for employees as workplace demands, such as an increased work pace, have never been higher.

If you would like a copy of the presentation, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## What is next?

During our January NORA WRT call, we asked what members would be

most interested in hearing about or what to discussed at future meetings.

The results from 18 respondents are indicated below:

Topics	Percent interest
Reduce workplace musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)	38.8
Reduce traumatic injuries that arise from safety hazards, such as slips, trips, falls, and contact with objects	44.4
Prevent work-related violence	16.6

As we move forward, we will incorporate this feedback into the information discussed and presented at our future meetings and communicated in our newsletters. Thank you for your participation! If you were unable to attend the meeting and would like to provide

your input, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

We also asked for volunteers to speak at future meetings. No worries, we have your information and will reach out to you in time! We are in the process of planning our next

meeting. It is likely that our guest speaker will be speaking on behalf of the industry response to COVID. If you have specific questions that you would like addressed or information that you would like to share at our next NORA sector council meeting, please reach out to us.

## Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) and the WRT Sector

On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. Since then, America's retailers have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, with grocers, pharmacies, and other retailers working hard to make sure every family has what they need. But many retailers were required to shut down storefronts throughout the country, based on local requirements to protect our communities and stop the spread of the novel coronavirus. During that time, guidance was needed on how to protect the safety and health of those essential workers that have been keeping our country afloat.

As many states are beginning to relax stay-at-home guidelines, it is now time to prepare to safely re-open the wholesale and retail trade sector. During this time, it is important to focus on the health and wellness of both employees and our customers.

**Some of the guidance available is listed below:**

CDC updated the [Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) to provide updated information about returning to work including cleaning and disinfection, best practices for conducting social distancing, and strategies and recommendations that can be implemented to respond to COVID-19.

CDC small business [guidance](#) provides steps that are recommended to protect employees and prepare small businesses for disruption from COVID-19.

CDC has published two new fact-sheets for [grocery and food retail workers](#), including those who [deliver food and groceries](#). These workers may be at risk for exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19. The factsheets outline CDC recommendations to protect grocery and food retail workers from COVID-19 through steps, such as maintaining a distance

of six feet from others, expanding remote shopping options, contactless delivery, proper hand hygiene, and routinely cleaning frequently touched surfaces such as cash registers, payment terminals, steering wheel, door handles, and seatbelt buckles.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) released guidance on preparing workplaces for COVID-19 in [Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#).

The Environmental Protection Agency has released a [list of disinfectants that are approved for use against COVID-19](#).

**Additional resources include:**

- [Symptoms](#)
- [What to do if you're sick \(including when to discontinue home isolation\)](#)
- [Are you at higher risk for severe illness?](#)
- [Cleaning and disinfection guidance for community, non-healthcare facilities](#)
- [EPA's list of disinfectants to use against the virus that causes COVID-19](#)

## COVID-19 Best Practices Workgroup

Hello everyone, I hope everyone has continued to be safe and healthy during these difficult and exceptional times. For most of us, these times represent a change like nothing we have ever seen before. While our economy was put on a hold for the majority of the United States, many companies within the Wholesale and Retail Trade (WRT) sector have continued to be open and supplying many of the necessities needed by our citizens. Obviously, these workers have been some of the heroes of our society as they continue to risk their lives to keep the supplies and food flowing. As our economies are beginning to open with a broader focus, I would challenge the WRT NORA sector to come together and

develop a set of recommendations or best practices for the “new normal” of COVID-19. I would like to put together a team to develop these best practices that can provide companies some of the solutions, processes, and policies that will keep workers safe. I think if we bring many of you together and share the similar experiences, we can develop a broad list of options for companies and specifically small businesses that have been shut down during the last 6 months. We will need to focus on effective but inexpensive options to be the most effective. Thus, I am calling on you to volunteer to be on the team to put the best practices material together but also to send in examples

of what you have found to be effective and safe for workers. We will need a broad number of examples and pictures to provide individuals and companies within WRT with real world experiences and options. We can also recruit others that are not part of the NORA WRT council to help with this initiative. It is my hope to get a group assembled at the next Sector Council meeting on June 25<sup>th</sup>. Please let me know your perspectives and thoughts, whether you get involved in this or not. Again, stay safe and Godspeed in your efforts to get your companies back to normal, pre-COVID-19.

Kermit Davis  
Co-Chair of WRT NORA Sector Council

To find previous editions of the Wholesale and Retail Trade NORA sector bulletins, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/nora/councils/wrt/bulletins.html>

This is a product of the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) Wholesale and Retail Trade Sector Council. It does not necessarily represent an official position of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For a monthly update on news about NORA, subscribe to *NIOSH eNews* by visiting [www.cdc.gov/niosh/eNews](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/eNews).

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