



Wholesale and Retail Trade

Advancing priorities through research and partnerships

The Wholesale and Retail Trade (WRT) industry consists of 1.6 million businesses that employ nearly 22 million workers. This is more than any other major industry (except service) sector in the U.S. The large and diverse workforce and the wide variety of activities include many that pose serious risks of injury and death to employees.

Much is known about causation and prevention of occupational fatalities, injuries, and illnesses that has not been broadly implemented in workplaces. For example, the risk of robbery in retail stores can be effectively lowered by the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies. CPTED programs have been implemented effectively in some retail companies; full implementation of CPTED interventions in convenience stores, and other small stores susceptible to robbery, such as liquor stores, grocery stores, gas stations, news stands and others, could have a profound impact upon the WRT fatality and injury/illness experience. Interventions and programs recommended to reduce the risk of highway motor-vehicle incidents, if more broadly implemented in WRT companies, could reduce risks and translate to fewer injuries and deaths.

In response the Wholesale and Retail Trade Sector Council, organized under the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA), has developed a strategic plan that represents a national agenda to reduce injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in the sector through a focused program of research and prevention. The following strategic goals are intended to address the top safety and health concerns in WRT:

REDUCE MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

Workers who receive, move, handle, store, package, load/unload, and transport or deliver the products are at risk of overexertion injuries from lifting, pushing/pulling, carrying and positioning products and using associated equipment.

BURDEN OF OCCUPATIONAL INJURY & ILLNESS IN WRT

- 481 fatalities from work-related injuries related to violence, motor-vehicle incident, fall, and struck by objects in 2008.
- 731,900 nonfatal occupational injuries from overexertion and contact with objects
- 19,300 illnesses such as skin, respiratory disorders, hearing loss and others
- \$1,901 million in costs of occupational fatal injuries, 2003–2006

Highest Nonfatal Injury & Illness Incidence Rates, 2008

WRT Industry subsectors (NAICS)	Annual average employment	Incidence rate per 100 full-time workers
Private industry	115,352,600	3.9
Wholesale sector (42)	6,083,800	3.7
Beer, wine and distilled alcoholic beverage merchant	162,000	7.8
Metal and mineral merchant	133,100	6.6
Farm products and raw material	74,100	6.4
Grocery related product merchants	739,300	6.1
Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts	347,100	5.5
Miscellaneous durable goods merchants	307,600	4.8
Lumber and other construction materials	251,800	4.6
Machinery, equipment, and supplies merchant	696,100	4.2
Retail sector (44–45)	15,762,300	4.4
Pet and pet supplies stores	100,500	7.9
Home centers	664,000	7.0
Hobby, toy and game stores	147,700	7.0
Warehouse clubs and superstores	1,151,500	6.4
Supermarkets and other grocery stores	2,395,100	6.2
Tire dealers	170,600	6.0
All other general merchandise stores	335,000	5.8
Department stores	1,599,400	5.1

Source: <http://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/osh/os/ostb2071.pdf>



The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is working with many partners to develop an updated National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA). The NORA Wholesale and Retail Trade (WRT) Sector Council is a group of partners working to develop a national agenda for the WRT sector.

The main events and exposures associated with nonfatal injury in the WRT sector are overexertion and contact with objects or equipment. Certain WRT industry groups are more at risk than others. The higher risk subsectors include beer, wine and distilled alcoholic beverage; metal and mineral merchant; grocery and related products; pet and pet supply stores; home centers; and supermarkets and other grocery stores.

REDUCE TRAUMATIC INJURIES

Traumatic injury risks are associated with slips, falls and product handling tasks. Risk factors are size and shape of packages being carried, work areas, lighting, uneven surfaces, shoe and floor surface friction, work pace, and work area layout and design and their influence on slips, trips, and falls. Implementing an “effective slip and fall prevention program” may be the best defense against getting caught with high workers’ compensation insurance, liability insurance, OSHA fines, or a lawsuit.

REDUCE WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The leading cause of worker fatality in the retail sector is assault and violent acts. Higher risk industries include sales occupations where workers are engaged with the public in tasks involving exchange of products and cash in publicly accessible stores, which represent higher risks of robbery-related injuries and death.

REDUCE MOTOR-VEHICLE INCIDENTS

Transportation-related events cause the most deaths in the wholesale sector.

IMPROVE OUTREACH TO SMALL BUSINESS

A large number of wholesale and retail trade operations are small businesses where safety and health issues are seldom recognized or discussed by owners and operators.

INCREASE UNDERSTANDING OF VULNERABLE WORKERS

The WRT sector employs the most diverse workforce. The WRT workforce ranges in ages from the youngest of workers to the oldest of workers, as well as workers of varying ethnic background, education and disabilities.

To discuss opportunities for involvement, please contact:

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Surveillance

Increase number of NORA collaborators to develop, improve, and maintain databases in order to enable data sharing and ongoing surveillance to track the WRT Strategy outcomes and focus areas in order to identify specific jobs/tasks within subsectors and occupational groups that result in high injury rates; trends and emerging problems; underreporting; and injury severity.

Analytic Research

Increase research into causation and prevention in WRT. This includes administrative and behavior oriented prevention strategies addressing homicide risks in retail; risk factors specific to WRT highway driving and associated prevention strategies; etiology and prevention of fatalities and injuries resulting from contact with objects and equipment during WRT operations; and risk factors specific to high-risk WRT subsectors for overexertion injuries, falls, and other injury events and exposures. Researchers are also encouraged to develop economic models that assess costs of injury outcomes, And potential savings that could result from application of known, effective prevention measures.

Prevention Research and Practice

Identify known solutions through drawing upon industry, safety and health, and scientific/technical expertise; research and development aimed at producing new preventive solutions; and conduct of intervention effectiveness studies as needed for untested prevention programs, practices, technologies, and products.

Implementation

Move research findings to practice. A key to research-to-practice (r2p) efforts is collaborations between researchers and partners and stakeholders who can help to move prevention knowledge to practical application at the worksite. Researchers and practitioners also need to explore barriers to successful transfer and implementation of known effective strategies and programs. Available knowledge needs to be better organized and accessible to industry users, researchers, and safety and health specialists.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

We have learned that one of five workers are employed in the WRT sector and nearly 3/4 of a million workers sustain a recorded injury each year, yet there are numerous cost effective solutions. Join with us and we can make a difference and impact the well being of your workforce. We are looking for partners and opportunities to implement our Agenda. **For more information:** WRT program, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/wrt/>