



NORA

National Occupational
Research Agenda (NORA)
Councils:
FY 2021 Highlights

April 2022

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Additional Information

For more information about the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA), visit the web site www.cdc.gov/nora.

For a monthly NORA update, subscribe to *NIOSH eNews* by visiting www.cdc.gov/niosh/eNews.

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Introduction

The National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) is a partnership program. It aims to stimulate innovative research and promote widespread adoption of improved workplace health and safety practices. Unveiled in 1996, NORA runs in ten-year cycles.¹ The third decade began on October 1, 2016 and runs until September 30, 2026. NORA is organized into ten industry sectors and seven health and safety cross-sectors. The industry sectors are based on major areas of the U.S. economy. The seven health and safety cross-sectors are organized according to the major health and safety issues affecting the U.S. working population.

Sectors

- Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing
- Construction
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Manufacturing
- Mining
- Oil and Gas Extraction
- Public Safety
- Services
- Wholesale and Retail Trade
- Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities

Cross-Sectors

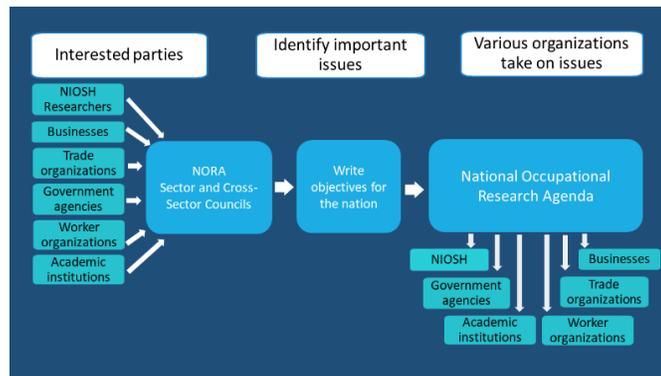
- Cancer, Reproductive, Cardiovascular, and Other Chronic Disease Prevention
- Hearing Loss Prevention
- Immune, Infectious, and Dermal Disease Prevention
- Musculoskeletal Health
- Respiratory Health
- Traumatic Injury Prevention
- Healthy Work Design and Well-Being

Each sector and cross-sector has a council of stakeholders from universities, large and small businesses, professional societies, government agencies, and worker organizations. Each council writes and maintains a research agenda for the nation. The agendas collectively make up the National Occupational Research Agenda. Councils work on the areas identified in their agenda through information sharing, partnerships, and enhancing dissemination and implementation of evidence-based practices.

NIOSH is just one of many organizations that make NORA possible. The councils help build close partnerships among members. They also encourage broader collaborations between councils and other organizations. The information sharing and collaborative efforts that result from these partnerships help promote widespread adoption of improved workplace practices based on research results.

¹ For more on the history of NORA, see <https://www.cdc.gov/nora/history.html>

As the steward of NORA, NIOSH supports this effort in two main ways. First, NIOSH organizes its portfolio of [research programs](#) according to the NORA framework. NIOSH sector/cross-sector program leaders co-chair the NORA councils alongside a person from another organization. Second, NIOSH uses the national agenda as a critical input into its own [strategic plan](#).



Flowchart for NORA. Credit: NIOSH

This report highlights the activities and accomplishments of the 17 NORA councils in fiscal year (FY) 2021 (October 2020 – September 2021) and serves as a follow up to the [report on achievements in FYs 2016-2018](#) and highlights [FY 2019](#) and [FY 2020](#). Accomplishments from the first and second decades of NORA are available in reports on the [NORA website](#).

Accomplishments

NORA council leaders and members continued to demonstrate their commitment to occupational safety and health, despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Councils were also attentive to other health and safety issues that pre-date the pandemic and continue to affect workers alongside COVID-19.

Information Sharing

One of the most important functions of NORA councils is information sharing. Council meetings and webinars frequently feature high quality presentations from council members or guest speakers. Many focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, especially vaccination, mental health, and long-term implications:

- The Healthcare and Social Assistance Council meetings were almost entirely devoted to COVID-19. For example, their February meeting featured presentations on:
 - needlestick injuries
 - West Virginia’s experience with COVID-19 vaccination, and
 - COVID-19 vaccination survey of healthcare workers conducted by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) National Nurse Alliance.
- The Respiratory Health Council (RHC) hosted speakers at three meetings related to COVID-19 and occupation. This includes one in January to address respiratory protection and another in March that highlighted activities by the Washington State Dept. of Labor and Industries. Workers’ compensation data took center stage at the RHC meeting in August. Presentations covered the occupational implications of long COVID, the early

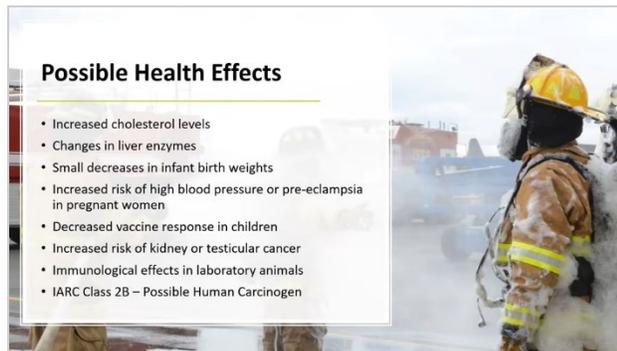
impact of COVID-19 on workers' compensation claims, and workers' compensation for COVID-19 in Ohio.

- A crossover meeting between the Services Council and the Healthy Work Design and Well-Being Council in May focused on workplace mental health during and after the pandemic. Presentations covered building a healthy workplace culture, the NIOSH Healthy Work Design and Well-Being program, and resources for mitigating stress and supporting mental health in the workplace.
- The Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities (TWU) considered how best to support TWU essential workers and work policies post-pandemic in September. The meeting featured a guest presentation on the future of worker safety and health in the trucking industry.

Many meetings continued to address priority occupational safety and health issues identified in NORA agendas before the pandemic. Some councils held events on these issues:

- The Mining Council hosted a technical session, "NORA: Automation and Autonomy," during the virtual Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration Conference. It featured five presentations and had record attendance.
- The Cancer, Reproductive, Cardiovascular, and Other Chronic Disease (CRC) Council sponsored a webinar titled "Stress and Cardiovascular Disease Among First Responders: Data from the Buffalo Cardio-Metabolic Occupational Police Stress (BCOPS) Study." Study investigators gave presentations highlighting the current findings of the BCOPS study along with suggestions for potential intervention strategies to reduce stress in first responders. The [recording](#) is available.

- The Public Safety Council held a virtual meeting titled "State of Research and Practice for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)." First responders are exposed to these so-called "forever chemicals" when they are putting out building and vehicle fires, using special class B foams, or wearing protective clothing that use treatments/additives. This meeting had three sessions with a dozen presentations on exposure assessment, health effects and toxicology, and personal protective equipment and materials. The [recording](#) and a [summary NIOSH Science Blog post](#) are available online.



NORA Public Safety Council PFAS Webinar. Credit: NIOSH

- The Musculoskeletal Health Council published an ePoster on disseminating their projects at the International Ergonomics Association Triennial Conference in June 2021.

Beyond presentations, councils routinely share information informally. Several councils devote time at meetings to round-robin updates, and others are in frequent email contact to share new resources.

- The Wholesale and Retail Trade Council publishes a newsletter one to two times a year, with articles on topics of interest to council members. The [2021 edition](#) focused on COVID-19 and vaccination.
- The Cancer, Reproductive, Cardiovascular, and Other Chronic Disease Prevention (CRC) Council maintained their newsletter with announcements, details on upcoming webinars and events hosted by a variety of organizations, and citations of newly published research articles.
- The Manufacturing Mondays series continued to grow in 2021. Weekly emails are sent to NORA Manufacturing Council members and others in the manufacturing community. The series shares interesting facts about a specific manufacturing operation and the product produced. There were also four webinars on a range of health and safety issues in manufacturing.



NORA CRC Council May 2021 Newsletter. Credit: NIOSH

Partnerships

The NORA councils are an important vehicle for developing and maintaining partnerships. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued throughout 2021. Council members regularly connected members of the CDC COVID-19 response to colleagues who could serve as a resource or sounding-board for vaccine-related issues or questions. Sector councils also held discussions of worker issues and communication strategies for vaccine uptake. The councils shared these strategies with the CDC’s COVID-19 Response, providing helpful on-the-ground perspectives. In turn, NIOSH co-chairs shared the latest CDC recommendations with NORA council members so they could have the most up to date information.

Partnerships among Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing (AgFF) Council members became stronger this year through a series of monthly “hangout” sessions. Each session had a special topic ranging from COVID-19 vaccination to climate change to robotics and automation. These informal meetings took place virtually and focused on discussion and networking. The AgFF Council also bolstered its ties with the Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA) this year. The Chair of ASHCA became the co-Chair of the NORA AgFF Council alongside the NIOSH co-chair. ASHCA and the AgFF Council will be working together more closely in the future, as many members are in both organizations.

The collaboration between the NORA Hearing Loss Prevention Council and the Department of Defense, Hearing Center for Excellence (HCE) has continued to develop. The Council is coordinating efforts with HCE to incorporate fit-testing into the Department of Defense hearing conservation programs and develop recommended best practices.

In 2021, a workgroup of the NORA Construction Sector Council assisted CPWR-The Center for Construction Research and Training and the American National Standards Institute Z359 National Work at Heights Task Force in the development of a national survey to gather information on common underlying causes of falls from heights. The data from the survey,

which asked respondents to provide information about a fall incident or incidents experienced, witnessed, or investigated, are being evaluated.

Promoting Evidence-Based Solutions

NORA councils also work to communicate the findings of occupational safety and health research. Many of these efforts focused on COVID-19:

- The Manufacturing Council workgroup authored a guide, [Ventilation Strategies to Reduce the Risk Of COVID-19 in Manufacturing](#). It is posted on the webpage of the National Association of Manufacturers.
- An AgFF Council workgroup wanted to create tailored best practices for vaccine distribution and uptake in agriculture, focusing specifically on foreign-born and migrant/seasonal workers. The group presented a poster on the topic at the 2021 ASHCA Summit in March.
- Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities (TWU) members appeared on SiriusXM channel 146 (trucking channel) and discussed COVID-19 safety/health procedures to prevent infection among truck drivers. In April, two TWU members appeared on the *Women In Trucking* show, hosted by TWU Council member Ellen Voie. In June, two TWU members participated in the *Turning the Corner on COVID: A Road Dog Trucking News Special*.
- A Construction Council workgroup continued to share best practices and innovative approaches related to COVID-19 in the construction industry. They identified materials to be included in the [National Construction Center \(CPWR\) COVID-19 Clearinghouse Website](#).

The NORA Traumatic Injury Prevention (TIP) Council had an eventful year. They published two sets of posters on [Slip Resistant Shoe Tread Wear](#). The posters help healthcare and food service workers check the tread on their shoes with a simple visual aid (using a AA battery), and determine if it is time to replace their shoes. They are available in English and Spanish. Following a meeting focused on workplace violence and COVID-19, several members of the TIP Council also published a NIOSH Science Blog entitled [Home Healthcare Workers: A Growing and Diverse Workforce at High Risk for Workplace Violence](#).



NORA TIP Council Shoe Tread Wear Posters
Credit: NIOSH

The NORA Oil and Gas Extraction Council organized the [Silica in the Oilfield Summit 2.0](#) with support from the University of Colorado Center for Health, Work & Environment. Held on April 13 and 14, 2021, this virtual event brought together over 300 representatives from NIOSH, OSHA, and upstream oil and gas industry partners. Presentations provided state-of-the-art knowledge on the control of workers' exposures to respirable crystalline silica in the oilfield.

Looking Forward

In our ever-changing workforce the work of NORA Councils to champion occupational safety and health research is more vital than ever. Information sharing will continue with presentations and discussions during council meetings. Partnerships will continue to grow and thrive whether in a virtual or in-person environment. Council workgroups will continue to develop and produce projects, such as health and safety campaigns and resource guides. Those interested in joining a council are welcome to contact NORACoordinator@cdc.gov

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