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Weekly Safety Tip

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May 18, 2015

SCI Safety Tip: Study identifies characteristics of vulnerable workers

Source: <http://www.blr.com>

Date: May 15, 2015

Workers who are Hispanic, young, and work for small construction firms face greater occupational safety and health challenges than almost any other group. Keep reading to learn more about this triple threat.

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The problem was identified in a new report by the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Titled "Overlapping vulnerabilities: The occupational safety and health of young immigrant workers in small construction firms," it documents the layers of risk and focuses on contributing factors. The full report is available [here](#).

Prior studies have shown that because of their work in dangerous occupations, Hispanic immigrant workers experience a higher occupational mortality rate (5.9 per 100,000 workers) than all other workers (4.0 per 100,000). Hispanics were the only ethnic group to see an increase in the number of workplace fatalities in 2013.



SCI Safety Slogan

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James Lehrke-SCI

The report explains that many immigrants are unfamiliar with the risks they face on the job, unaware of standard safety procedures, receive little or no job training, do not speak or understand English, and have work styles that differ from those of coworkers or employees.

Another issue is that businesses with 20 or fewer employees historically hire those at greater risk for job injury, such as young people, those with less education, and immigrants. Smaller firms often lack an occupational safety and health infrastructure to protect these workers.

ASSE president Trish Ennis commented, “The safety community and the construction industry must take note of this report and work together to improve the safety conditions outlined in it.” Ennis said ASSE and NIOSH are committed to working with others to develop effective solutions.

Ways to reduce the risk for young, Hispanic construction workers

The ASSE/NIOSH report identifies several efforts that have shown promise in addressing the needs of these vulnerable workers.

- **A partnership between NIOSH and the Mexican government** addresses occupational health inequalities among immigrant workers. The collaboration focuses on three key areas—research and surveillance, outreach, and building institutional capacity.
- **New Labor, a worker center in New Jersey**, introduced a program to teach immigrant day laborers to serve as peer safety leaders.
- **Research on fall protection** identified the need for clear, strong incentives for contractors to provide rather than ignore fall protection measures. Contractor associations, unions, and other partners are offering incentives such as OSHA 10-hour training to workers and employers.
- **A University of California, Berkeley model training program** teaches small business owners and managers to create and implement injury and illness prevention programs.
- **A free curriculum, Youth@ Work—Talking Safety**, teaches foundational workplace safety and health skills and knowledge. It was developed by NIOSH and other partners.

SCI OSHA Compliance: OSHA, NIOSH release new toolkit to better protect hospital workers from transmissible diseases

Source: www.osha.gov

Date: May 14, 2015

WASHINGTON - The Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health today released the [Hospital Respiratory Protection Toolkit*](#), a resource for health care employers to use to protect hospital staff from respiratory hazards.

Respirators are used to protect against exposures to airborne transmissible infectious diseases as well as chemicals and certain drugs that may be used in healthcare settings. OSHA’s [Respiratory Protection Standard](#) requires that health care employers establish and maintain a respiratory protection program in workplaces where workers may be exposed to respiratory hazards.

“Hospitals are one of the most hazardous places to work,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. “One of the ways that we can protect workers in a health care setting is by providing employers with the resources needed to ensure a safe workplace.

This toolkit will help protect those workers who dedicate their lives to caring for others.”

“Appropriate respiratory protection is a vital line of defense against airborne hazards hospital workers might face on the job,” said NIOSH Director John Howard, M.D. “This toolkit is an important resource to help health care employers ensure their workers are out of harm’s way when it comes to respiratory hazards.”

The toolkit covers respirator use, existing public health guidance on respirator use during exposure to infectious diseases, hazard assessment, the development of a hospital respiratory protection program, and additional resources and references on hospital respiratory protection programs. Appendix D is an editable [document](#) that each hospital can customize to meet its specific needs.



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Quick Tips for Healthy Living

National Employee Health and Fitness Day

National Employee Health and Fitness Day (NEHFD), is a national observance celebrated the third Wednesday in May. It was created to promote the benefits of physical activity for employees through their work site health promotion activities.” Even though NEHFD is a one day celebration, it raises awareness about the physical and fiscal benefits of establishing and maintaining healthy habits at work,” said Nichole Kelley-Korson, Governor’s Council Director of Active Work Environments. (2006)

How can you promote this program?

- Sponsor a healthy breakfast or lunch
- Leave a piece of fruit on each employee’s workstation
- Host a “fitness walk” during lunch breaks; get the CEO to lead the walk
- Encourage employees to hand deliver messages rather using e-mail or voicemail
- Provide worksite health screenings on May 20*
- Invite a fitness instructor to offer before or after work demonstrations on May 20

How can my company benefit?

- Increased productivity among employees
- Reduced rates of absenteeism and sickness
- Increased well-being among employees
- Improved physical fitness and stamina
- Reduced stress among employees

To supplement the toolkit, The Joint Commission, an accrediting body for more than 20,500 health care organizations and programs in the United States, developed an educational monograph, [Implementing Hospital Respiratory Protection Programs: Strategies from the Field](#), to assist hospitals in implementing respiratory protection programs. The monograph, produced in collaboration with NIOSH’s National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory, identifies common implementation challenges, provides specific examples of innovative strategies from healthcare organizations and examines the role of leadership, quality improvement, fit testing and training challenges, and program evaluation.

“Respiratory protection programs enhance safety for both workers and patients, but there are many common challenges associated with their implementation,” said Ana McKee, M.D., executive vice president and chief medical officer, The Joint Commission. “We hope that by showcasing the innovative and effective strategies used by health care organizations across the country to overcome some of these challenges, hospitals can learn from one another as they implement and improve their own respiratory protection programs.”

NIOSH is the Federal agency that conducts research and makes recommendations for preventing work-related injuries and illnesses. It was created under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 and is part of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More information about NIOSH can be found at www.cdc.gov/niosh.

OSHA has a suite of resources on protecting workers from safe patient handling hazards on its [Worker Safety in Hospitals](#) Web page.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA’s role is to ensure these conditions for America’s working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov.



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In Loving Memory of Jessica Lehrke

