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Volume 21, Number 9 (January 2024)

From the Director's Desk

John Howard, M.D., Director, NIOSH

Exploring Strategic Foresight in the New Year

Welcome to 2024! I am excited by all the possibilities this new year holds for occupational safety and health (OSH). However, I also wonder what new challenges might be on the horizon for work and working people. So far, the 2020s have brought a pandemic, numerous natural disasters, ever-changing technologies, and new data security and privacy concerns, to name a few. What disruptions might we face next? Are we ready for the impacts they may have on OSH research and practice?

To help provide answers to these questions, NIOSH has established a dedicated effort to bring [strategic foresight](#) to the OSH community. Strategic foresight is a forward-looking and action-oriented discipline. It helps us look ahead and ask what *may* be coming, how it *might* affect us, and what we *can do today* to prepare for the future.

Strategic foresight does not try to accurately predict the future. Instead, it helps



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us identify and understand signals of change as they emerge. The early insights we gain from strategic foresight can reduce feelings of surprise and unpreparedness for the changes when they fully arrive in the future. These insights can also help us plan how we might start taking action now so we can influence the future in a preferred direction as it unfolds.

Since 2020, NIOSH has engaged in the practice of strategic foresight to support OSH readiness for the future. In 2021, we published a flagship paper describing [strategic foresight as a tool that can help shape the future of work](#). In early 2023, we shared results from the first NIOSH foresight project, which explored [four possible futures and their implications for OSH research and service](#). Later that same year, we published findings from a second project focused on [preparing the OSH workforce for future disruptions](#). To broaden the reach of our work, we have been sharing important strategic foresight insights on the [NIOSH Science Blog](#). We also host the *Foresight Friday @ NIOSH* webinar series. These webinars serve as a forum for learning about foresight approaches and best practices directly from experts in the field.

As we move into the new year, I encourage us all to consider how the practice of strategic foresight can support our futures thinking, preparedness, planning, and actions. After all, the best way for us to predict the future is to create it ourselves.

To learn more about NIOSH's growing strategic foresight portfolio, please visit the [Strategic Foresight at NIOSH](#) webpage. You may also contact the NIOSH Office of Research Integration at ORI@cdc.gov.

Research Rounds

Occupational Injuries Among Construction Workers by Age and Related Economic Loss: Findings From Ohio Workers' Compensation, USA: 2007–2017

Study authors: Harpriya Kaur, CDC; Steven Wurzelbacher, NIOSH; Tim Bushnell, NIOSH; Stephen Bertke, NIOSH; Alysha Meyers, NIOSH; James Grosch, NIOSH; Steven Naber, Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (OHBWC); and Michael Lampl, OHBWC

Why is this [study](#) important?

This study addresses longstanding concerns about hazards to younger construction workers and work disabilities of older construction workers. It focuses on estimating age differences in the rate, severity, and cost of work injuries.

2017

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How did you do the study?

We used Ohio workers' compensation claims for construction workers to estimate claim rates and costs by age group. We classified and analyzed claim rates for transportation incidents; slips, trips, and falls; exposure to harmful substances and environments; contact with objects and equipment; and overexertion and bodily reaction. We used American Community Survey data to determine the percentage of workers in each age group.

What did you find?

Regardless of the cause of injury, severity and costs tended to be highest for those aged 45 years and older. This finding suggests that as workers age, injuries might be more severe and require a longer recovery period.


From 2007–2017, state-insured construction employers in Ohio accepted more than 72,000 injury claims. Claim rates varied by age for all causes except transportation-related injuries:

- Contact with objects and equipment and exposure to harmful substances and environments—claim rates were highest among 18–24 year olds.
- Slips, trips, and falls—claim rates were highest among 55–64 year olds.
- Overexertion—claim rates increased and then declined with age, with the highest occurring among 35–44 year olds.

What are the next steps?

These findings can be used to tailor workplace policies and practices that align with age-related patterns in work injuries. By addressing the safety needs of both older and younger construction workers, these policies and practices could enable older workers to continue working longer.

Maternal Occupational Exposure to Selected Organic and Chlorinated Solvents and Delivery of Small-for-Gestational Age or Preterm Infants

Study authors: Kristen W. Van Buren, Carissa M. Rocheleau, [I-Chen Chen](#) , NIOSH; Tania A. Desrosiers, University of North Carolina; Wayne T. Sanderson, University of Kentucky; Maria D. Politis, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences; and Elizabeth C. Ailes, CDC

Why is this [study](#) important?

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[What's this?](#)

Solvents are substances used to dissolve other substances. They are found in a range of products like paints, varnishes, lacquers, adhesives, glues, and cleaning and degreasing products. Millions of U.S. workers handle solvents each year.

Solvents can have a wide range of properties, including how hazardous they can be to a person's health. Some solvents have been linked to increased cancer risk, nerve damage, and reproductive harm. This study looked at the possible effects of exposure to 10 solvents shortly before pregnancy and in the first trimester.

How did you do the study?

Over 7,500 mothers participating in the CDC [National Birth Defects Prevention Study](#) answered questions about their jobs. Occupational experts used this information to estimate the mothers' work-related exposure to certain solvents shortly before pregnancy or in the first trimester. Researchers analyzed the information to see whether solvent exposure was associated with babies being born too soon (preterm) or too small (small-for-gestational age).

What did you find?

Exposure to certain solvents was not associated with an increased risk of having a baby born too soon or too small in our study. However, most of the people in this study who might handle solvents would only have used small amounts infrequently. The results suggested that people who handled larger amounts of solvents might have increased risk, but there were too few people with this amount of solvent exposure to be sure.

Exposure occurred most often in three job groups: personal care and service, healthcare and technical, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance.

What are the next steps?

While these findings are reassuring for women who only handle small amounts of solvents, more studies on workers exposed to larger amounts of certain solvents are still needed.

Highlights

Nominations Due by March 1 for the 2024 Prevention through Design Award

The NIOSH Prevention through Design (PtD) award recognizes those who have eliminated or reduced hazards through design or added knowledge that enabled PtD solutions. You can resubmit previous nominations. To learn how to nominate an individual, group, or business, visit the [PtD Award webpage](#).

Winners Announced in the 2023 NIOSH Mine Safety and Health Technology Innovations Awards

The NIOSH Mining Program, in conjunction with the Essential Minerals Association and the National Mining Association, recently recognized three companies for new safety practices or innovations. To learn more about the winners. Read the full [NIOSH Update](#).


Reducing Fatigue in the Workplace

NIOSH recently released a new Feature on Fatigue. Fatigue can affect any worker in any job and may have serious consequences for worker safety and health. Providing easy-to-understand information for employers and workers about ways to reduce fatigue will help to minimize risks and improve the safety of all workplaces. [Read the full Feature](#).

Monthly Features

Meetings and Events











NIOSH Total Worker Health Webinar Series: The Employer Pathway to Diabetes Prevention

Join us January 24 at 1 p.m. (ET) for an exciting presentation on diabetes prevention and work. [The NIOSH Total Worker Health® Webinar Series](#) welcomes Parul Rahbari from the CDC Division of Diabetes Translation, Sara Hanlon from Empower Outcomes, and David Shapiro from the Center for Health, Work, & Environment. [Register](#)  now to learn more.

View more occupational safety and health-related [conferences, meetings, webinars, and events](#) hosted by NIOSH and partners.

Communication Products

FACE Reports

- [Company Co-owner Backed Over by Work Truck—Washington](#)   ([slideshow](#)  )
- [Day Laborer Dies in a Collapsed Trench Being Dug to Repair a Sewer Line—California](#)
- [Young Employee Safety Hazard Alert—Oregon](#)  
- [Owner Crushed Loading Log Skidder on Lowboy Trailer—Washington](#)   ([slideshow](#)  )

Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program Report

- [Brick Gable End Collapses at a Residential Fire Killing a Fire Captain and Seriously Injuring Three Other Firefighters— Illinois](#)
-

Science Blog

[Sign up](#) to receive updates about new NIOSH Science Blogs delivered directly to your inbox! Here are the blogs from last month:

- [Help for the Holidays: Preventing Fatigue, Violence, and Stress in Retail](#)
 - [Stay Safe and Warm This Holiday Season Like Frosty the Worker](#)
 - [Preparing for the Future: NIOSH Applications of Strategic Foresight](#)
 - [Want to Improve the Well-being of Health Workers? The System Itself Must Change](#)
 - [Hazardous Exposures to Silica in Metal and Nonmetal Mining Indicate the Need for Better Prevention](#)
-

NORA

Upcoming NORA Meetings:

Hearing Loss Prevention NORA Council Meeting

Join the Hearing Loss Prevention NORA council for their winter meeting on January 17 from 3:00–4:30 p.m. (EST). Please contact [Elizabeth Masterson](#) for the meeting invite.

Healthy Work Design & Wellbeing NORA Council Meeting

Join the Healthy Work Design & Wellbeing NORA council for their quarterly meeting on January 25 from 1:00–2:30 p.m. (EST). Please contact [Naomi Swanson](#) for the meeting invite.

News from Our Partners

Opioid Reversal Agents Included in Recommendations for Federal Facility Safety Stations

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and General Services Administration (GSA) recently released revised [Guidelines for Safety Station Programs in Federal Facilities](#) [↗](#). The guidelines now recommend opioid reversal agents as part of the safety program in federal buildings controlled by GSA. The NIOSH fact sheet on [Using Naloxone to Reverse Opioid Overdose in the Workplace](#) is cited as support for this addition to the guidance.

OSHA Replaces Their Traditional Hard Hats With Safety Helmets for Better Protection

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced the agency is replacing traditional hard hats used by its employees with more modern safety helmets. Read OSHA's [Safety and Health Information Bulletin](#) [↗](#) to learn more about key differences between traditional hard hats and modern safety helmets.

OSHA Issues New Requirements for Injury and Illness Tracking

OSHA has [new requirements](#) for submitting workplace injury and illness information. These changes went into effect January 1. Employers that meet certain size and industry criteria [must provide 2023 injury and illness data](#) by March 2. [Online aids](#), including new [videos](#) and [fact sheet](#), are available to help walk employers through the data submission process.

COVID's Impact on the Workforce: New Data From Wisconsin

Wisconsin's Occupational Health and Safety Surveillance Program staff published two articles on the pandemic's effects on workers:

- [Work and Life in the Balance: COVID-19 Mortality by Usual Occupation and Industry](#)
- [Incidence of COVID-19 and Worker's Compensation Utilization Among Food Manufacturing in Wisconsin, October 1, 2020–December 31, 2021](#)

Federal Register Notices

Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

The [notice](#) was posted on December 18, 2023. Comments must be received by February 7. The meeting will be held on February 14.

Newsroom

Careers

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