



# The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

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Promoting productive workplaces through safety and health research 

## eNews: Volume 22, Number 1 (May 2024)

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Volume 21, Number 13 (May 2024)

### From the Director's Desk

John Howard, M.D., Director, NIOSH

## Recognizing Older Americans Month: Working Toward Age-inclusive Workplaces

For over 60 years, May has been designated as a time to recognize and celebrate the many contributions of older adults to society, including in the workplace. Today, nearly one in four U.S. workers is at least 55 years old. In fact, workers 75 years and older are the fastest growing age group in the workforce. Underlying this demographic change is a remarkable increase in overall life expectancy. Living longer has produced many benefits for people and society. Older workers are valued for their expertise, work ethic, positive attitudes regarding work, and generally lower injury rates in the workplace.

An organizational management approach gaining momentum is age-inclusive work practices. These encourage recruiting, developing, and providing opportunities for workers to contribute no matter their age. Likewise, age-inclusive workplaces promote and prioritize worker safety, health, and well-being for all age groups. This approach appreciates the valuable contributions



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workers make throughout their entire working lives. It also recognizes that work experiences and occupational health issues change as we age. Some examples of age-inclusive practices include

- Offering flexible work arrangements to support changing life circumstances and address individual health needs. These arrangements can provide useful accommodations for individuals with disabilities. This flexibility can also help people with caregiving responsibilities and those in phased retirement planning by gradually reducing workload and work hours.
- Providing training and education opportunities to workers of all ages. These opportunities encourage workers, including older workers, to learn new skills and step into new roles. This practice supports worker engagement while helping employers with their employment needs. This is particularly important because skilled workers are predicted to continue to be in short supply.
- Improving working conditions to better fit workers' abilities and support the long-term health and safety of workers of all ages. For instance, modifying workstations to improve ergonomic conditions may reduce musculoskeletal strain and protect workers' health and safety as they age. This also accommodates limitations that workers may currently experience.

Strategies that promote age-inclusive workplaces can be found across many NIOSH program areas. I highlight three of these programs below:

- The [National Center for Productive Aging and Work](#) advances lifelong well-being for workers of all ages. The Center develops resources and tools supporting age-inclusive workplaces.
- The [Total Worker Health® Program](#) prioritizes a hazard-free workplace for all workers. It promotes integrated interventions that collectively address work safety, health, and well-being.
- The [Prevention through Design Program](#) works to eliminate and reduce hazards, as well as control risks as early as possible in the work process. The program focuses on building design, equipment, work methods, and new technologies.

As our knowledge of aging in the context of work continues to develop, two clear take-away messages can be celebrated during this special month for older Americans. First, older adults are an important segment of the workforce. Their extensive knowledge and experience add value to the workplace. Second, adopting age-inclusive work practices can help create more sustainable employment for older adults. These practices can also provide safety, health, and well-being benefits for all workers, regardless of age.

## Research Rounds

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## Representative Longitudinal Survey

NIOSH study author: Abay Asfaw

### Why is this study important?

We frequently hear about the effects of work on mental health, and access to paid sick leave is a well-recognized factor. Paid sick leave is associated with greater use of preventive healthcare, fewer delayed and emergency healthcare visits, and better health overall, including mental health, previous research has shown. Anxiety and depression are among the most common mental health issues. However, information is lacking on their relationship to paid sick leave. To understand the effects of paid sick leave on self-reported mental health, this study focused on anxiety and depression among U.S. workers.

### How did you do the study?

Using the publicly available 2019–2020 Longitudinal National Health Interview Survey by the National Center for Health Statistics, I examined more than 5,000 respondents and 9,700 observations. With this information, I calculated the percentage of workers with and without paid sick leave who reported daily feelings of anxiety, depression, or both. I also determined the likelihood of experiencing these feelings in relation to access to paid sick leave, controlling for other factors.

### What did you find?

Most workers—about 70%—reported that they had access to paid sick leave. Controlling for several demographic, economic, and behavioral variables, the odds of workers with access to paid sick leave to report daily depression, anxiety, or both were 56%, 31%, and 64% lower than the odds of workers without access to paid sick leave, respectively.

### What are the next steps?

More research should explore the potential benefit of expanding access to paid sick leave on reducing depression and anxiety by occupation or industry.

## Framework for Protecting and Promoting Employee Mental Health Through Supervisor Supportive Behaviors

Study authors: Leslie B. Hammer, Oregon Health & Science University; Jennifer Dimoff, University of Ottawa; and Cynthia D. Mohr and Shalene J. Allen, Portland State University

### Why is this study important?

Workplace mental health has become a key topic for many workers. The COVID pandemic and other issues, such as global warming and social and political divisions, have contributed to burnout, stress, and anxiety. These

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challenges are occurring in society overall, as well as in the workplace. Previous research shows that social connections and support contribute to better mental health and well-being, whether at work or at home. In this study, we wanted to understand what behaviors supervisors can do to help prevent risks and to protect workers' mental health.

### **How did you do the study?**

We reviewed published studies to identify behaviors that are proven to support workers' mental health. With this information, we developed a six-part framework that supervisors can follow.

### **What did you find?**

The framework has three active and three reactive behavioral steps. These are actions supervisors can take to help protect workers' mental health and reduce risks:

#### **Active behaviors**

- Emotional Support: Demonstrate concern through in-person contact.
- Practical Support: Inform about mental health resources and provide flexible work schedules.
- Role Modeling: Share how you manage stress and demonstrate the importance of your own mental health.

#### **Reactive behaviors**

- Reducing Stigma: Ensure that asking for help with mental health issues is acceptable and expected.
- Warning Sign Recognition: Be able to recognize changes in workers' behavior or attitude.
- Warning Sign Response: Show that you are available to help and ask open-ended questions about mental health.

### **What are the next steps?**

Based on our framework for supporting workers' health, three important areas emerged for future research and practice. These include supervisor training, the role of coworkers, and how to implement the framework.

## **Highlights**

### **Avian Flu: Interim Recommendations for Worker Protection**

CDC has released worker protection [recommendations](#) to reduce exposure to the novel Influenza A viruses that can cause disease in humans. Information is included on how to use personal protective equipment to keep safe. Employers and employees can visit the webpage and access this infographic to learn how to reduce the risk of infection: [Protect Yourself From H5N1 When Working With Farm Animals](#) (also in [Spanish](#)).

## **Workers' Memorial Day Statement by NIOSH Director Dr. John Howard**

Each year, NIOSH pauses on April 28, Workers' Memorial Day, to honor those whose death or suffering resulted from a workplace hazard. Words are not enough when it comes to change. Research has shown that worker health and safety rely on active involvement in ways that consider (1) workplace hazards, (2) work arrangements and environments, (3) employer-worker relationships, and (4) workers and their families. Read the [full statement](#) here.

## **Safe + Sound Week 2024**

Save the date for [Safe + Sound Week 2024](#)  during August 12–18. Safe + Sound Week is a nationwide event held each August recognizing the successes of workplace health and safety programs. The event offers information and ideas on how to keep America's workers safe.

## **Open NIOSH Job Opportunities**

- **Associate Director for Science for NIOSH Spokane Mining Division** – NIOSH seeks qualified candidates for an exciting career opportunity to serve as the Associate Director for Science in the Spokane Mining Research Division. This Division is part of the NIOSH Mining Program, which serves as the focal point for miner safety and health research at NIOSH. This position is being announced under the following vacancy announcements: [Research Science Officer, GS-0601-15](#)  and [Interdisciplinary \(Research General Engineer | Research Physical Scientist\), GS-0801/1301-15](#) . **The last day to apply is May 6.**
- **Associate Director for NIOSH Mining Program** – The Associate Director for Mining is responsible for managing, directing, coordinating, overseeing, and evaluating all activities of the Institute's mining programs, along with creating and maintaining strong relationships with mining industry groups. They provide leadership and support for the Directors of the Pittsburgh Mining Research Division and the Spokane Mining Research Division. This position serves as a Special Advisor to the Institute Director on all matters related to the overall NIOSH Mining Program. The position may reside in Washington, DC; Morgantown, West Virginia; Atlanta, Georgia; Cincinnati, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Denver, Colorado; or Spokane, Washington. The duty location will be determined upon selection. Read the [full announcement](#) to learn more about the position and how to apply. **The last day to apply is May 24.**

## **Nominations Open for Annual Safe-In-Sound Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention Award**

NIOSH, the National Hearing Conservation Association, and the Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation are accepting nominations for the [Safe-In-Sound Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention Award](#) .™ Submit your nomination to [nominations@saf einsound.us](mailto:nominations@saf einsound.us) describing why the individual or organization deserves the award. Deadlines are June 8 to nominate others and August 19 for self-nominations.

## **2024 Bullard Sherwood Award Strengthens Firefighter Safety**

This year's [NIOSH Bullard Sherwood Award](#) was presented to NIOSH researchers who collaborated with the Underwriters Laboratories Fire Safety Research Institute, Illinois Fire Service Institute, and Skidmore College to keep our nation's firefighters safer. The partners wrote a [comprehensive review](#)  offering evidence supporting different controls within the NIOSH Hierarchy of Controls for firefighting as an occupation. They then translated this article into a free, online [training course](#)  for firefighter cancer prevention. For more information contact [Kenny Fent](#).

## **In Memoriam: Dr. Nancy Stout**

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Dr. Nancy Stout. Nancy joined NIOSH in 1985 as a health statistician. During 1985–1996, she held various research and supervisory positions at NIOSH. In 1997, Nancy was appointed Director of the NIOSH Division of Safety Research. She held that position for 14 years until she retired in 2011. In her professional roles, Nancy traveled the world, spending six months in Sydney and Adelaide, Australia, at the Australian counterpart to NIOSH. She held memberships and participated in activities of more than 12 professional organizations. Nancy received several federal agency awards for her distinguished service and commitment to her projects. See the [full obituary](#) .



Photo by NIOSH

## Monthly Features

### Meetings and Events

#### **Foresight Friday @ NIOSH: Managing Work in the Future**

NIOSH is hosting the next Foresight Friday @ NIOSH on May 17, 11 a.m.–12 p.m. (ET). The webinar is titled “Managing Work Activities on the 2040 Horizon: Challenges for Occupational Safety and Health.” Attendees will learn how the French National Research and Safety Institute for the Prevention of Occupational Accidents and Diseases uses methods, such as design fiction and in-depth expert analysis, to study work management in the future. [Register](#) to learn more.

#### **Total Worker Health® Webinar on Supervisor Training to Reduce Public Health Worker Burnout**

Join us Wednesday, May 22, at 1 p.m. (ET), for a presentation on the NIOSH-developed, free internet-based training for supervisors to better prevent and address burnout among those they lead. Presenters will discuss the background and evidence for this training. Attendees will learn how they can benefit from the content and practical tools provided in the full training. [Registration](#) is open!

## Webinar on Clinical Best Practices for 9/11-Related Conditions

NIOSH is hosting a webinar in the series on [Best Practices for Clinical Care in the World Trade Center Health Program](#) titled "Cancer Screening and Cancer Control." The event will be presented by NIOSH's Dr. Geoffrey Calvert on May 23, 12-1 p.m. (ET). Continuing education credits will be offered. [Register](#) to attend.

## Total Worker Health® Webinar on Yoga and Meditation for Worker Well-Being

Curious about the benefits of yoga and meditation in workplace settings? Then join the *Total Worker Health®* Program on Thursday, May 30, at 2 p.m. (ET). Presenters will discuss the science and research behind yoga at work. They will also present current research on using transcendental meditation to improve healthcare worker well-being. Free continuing education is available. Find out more and [register](#)!

*View more occupational safety and health-related conferences, meetings, webinars, and events hosted by NIOSH and partners.*

## Communication Products

### Bibliography

- [NIOSH Bibliography of Communication and Research Products 2023](#)

### FACE Reports

- [Palm Tree Trimmer Dies From Asphyxia When Crushed by Palm Fronds—California](#)

### Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program Report

- [32-Year-Old Driver Suffers Fatal Heart Attack at Fire Station—North Carolina](#)
- [Firefighter-EMT Dies After Falling From the Roof of a Five-Story Commercial and Residential Condominium Complex—Colorado](#)

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## Science Blog

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

- [Celebrating 20 Years of Research: Highlights From NIOSH's Nanotechnology Research Center's Field Studies Team](#)
- [Women's History Month Reflections on Occupational Exposures and Health Equity](#)
- [Using Internal Traffic Control Plans to Prevent Construction Worker Injuries and Fatalities in Work Zones](#)
- [An Urgent Call to Address Work-related Psychosocial Hazards and Improve Worker Well-being](#)
- [Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace](#)
- [Keeping Junior Firefighters Safe and Healthy: The Fire Department's Role in Promoting Positive Childhood Experiences](#)
- [Support for Existing Expertise: Community-focused Training Initiatives to Improve the Safety and Health Of Tribal Buffalo Herd Workers](#)
- [2024 NIOSH Science and Service Awards](#)

- Workers' Memorial Day 2024: Statement by NIOSH Director
- A Deeper Look Into Protecting Wildland Firefighter Safety and Health

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## NORA

Check back next month for more from NORA.

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## News from Our Partners

### New Mortality Data Available

In March, the CDC National Center for Health Statistics released the 2022 mortality data. For the first time, the data include industry and occupation information for all 50 states and two city jurisdictions. The center has a [file for public-use](#) on their website. You can also find [tips for downloading the data](#) and beginning analysis on the National Occupational Mortality Surveillance website.

### Advisory Board on Toxic Substances and Worker Health Seeking New Members

The [Department of Labor's Advisory Board on Toxic Substances and Worker Health](#) is seeking nomination for new members. The board advises the Secretary of Labor on technical aspects of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program, involving compensation and medical benefits for nuclear weapons workers who were exposed to toxic substances. Nominations for 12-15 members are due May 17. Current members may be re-nominated. Send questions to [EnergyAdvisoryBoard@dol.gov](mailto:EnergyAdvisoryBoard@dol.gov).

### Upcoming Maritime Advisory Committee Meeting

The Maritime Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (MACOSH) will [meet virtually](#) Tuesday, June 4. Comments and requests to speak must be [submitted electronically](#) by May 21 under Docket No. OSHA-2022-0011. To attend or participate in the meeting, [register](#) or find more information on the [Federal Register Notice](#).

### Workplace Mental Health Action Summit 2024: Connecting in a Divided World

Health Action Alliance's largest event of the year is a fast-paced virtual program designed to help leaders strengthen mental health in the workplace. This year's summit, hosted in partnership with Mental Health Action Day, features compelling speakers who offer actionable strategies to help employers address polarization and loneliness. [Register](#) or learn more about the summit, being held May 2, at 2 p.m. (ET).

### New Report on Moral Injury Awareness Among Healthcare Workers

The Healthforce Center at the University of California, San Francisco, released a [report](#) on moral injury awareness and prevention in healthcare organizations. The report describes findings from a NIOSH-funded study on moral injury, including its effects, causes, occupational risks, and solutions.

### Modern Work and Workers' Voices Virtual Conference

The California Labor Lab, a NIOSH Center of Excellence for *Total Worker Health®*, is hosting a [virtual conference](#) May 7-8, at 9 a.m. (PT). The conference focuses on the state of working today. General registration is free.

### Updates From State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Programs

- *Work-Related Deaths From Falls Using Portable Ladders:* This [Hazard Alert](#) from the Michigan FACE Program provides fatal injury data, case studies, and prevention recommendations and resources to prevent falls while using

a portable ladder.

- *Driver Run Over by Semi-Trailer at Truck Stop:* The [Fatality Narrative](#)   from the Washington FACE program involves a truck driver who died after being crushed by a trailer. He had been walking back to his cab in a truck stop parking lot. To help prevent similar occurrences, the narrative provides prevention recommendations and requirements. The report can also be viewed as a [slideshow](#)  .

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## Federal Register Notice

### **Proposed Data Collection Submitted for Public Comment and Recommendations: Generic Clearance for the Collection of Qualitative Feedback on Agency Service Delivery**

The [notice](#)  was posted on March 14. Comments must be received by May 13.

### **National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; Outdoor Workers Exposed to Wildland Fire Smoke; Request for Information**

The [notice](#)  was posted on March 14. Comments must be received by May 13.

### **Approval Tests and Standards for Combination Unit Respirators**

The [notice](#)  was posted on March 15. Comments must be received by May 14.

### **Proposed Data Collection Submitted for Public Comment and Recommendations: The National Firefighter Registry (NFR) for Cancer**

The [notice](#)  was posted on March 22. Comments must be received by May 21.

### **Meeting of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health, Subcommittee for Dose Reconstruction Review, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health**

The [notice](#)  was posted on April 15. The meeting will be held on June 4.

### **Meeting of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health**

The [notice](#)  was posted on April 15. Comments must be received by June 19. The meeting will be held on June 26.

### **Proposed Data Collection Submitted for Public Comment and Recommendations: Direct Reading Methodologies, Sensors, and Robotics Technology Assessment in Lab/Simulator-based Settings.**

The [notice](#)  was posted on April 23. Comments must be received by June 24.

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