

ERC SUPPORT FOR SMALL INDUSTRIES

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First, let me say how proud I am to have been the NIOSH representative for the co-sponsorship of these Congresses for almost five years. By your attendance last year and this, the NIOSH/AMA decision to hold these meetings at NIOSH-funded Educational Resource Centers (ERC's) has proven most rewarding. I am especially pleased to see so many students of all disciplines here this morning.

What can ERC's do for small, local industries? Parenthetically, we might ask, "What can small industries do for their nearby ERC?" Dr. Daniel Murphy has indicated some of the services small businesses need and how difficult it is to raise the consciousness of these businesses to the level of their fiscal needs.

I have met with the people on President Carter's White House Committee on Small Business and attended meetings throughout the country where upwards of 500 small business men and women have voiced their problems. I can say that the common appeal is, "Get the government off our backs and we can make it." This is a definite opening wedge for ERC's, as they can do more than the government with their enhanced credibility for small businesses.

Foremost, in my opinion, is the need for every ERC to develop a clinic-based occupational safety and health (CBOSH) program. This is necessary not only for the university's own employees, but also to serve as a practical resource reference for the entire region. The clinical expertise is already in place.

A CBOSH program can serve to focus the coalition between epidemiology, clinical medicine and nursing, industrial hygiene, safety and research. It can also serve as an excellent training resource for students and graduate health professionals and as an orientation location for business leaders and workers.

A frequent question asked at the small business meeting was, "What is a small business?" My definition is: A small business is any business the owner or manager thinks is a small business. Dr. Eula Bingham, OSHA's Director, has recently appointed Kay Klatt as special assistant for small business. In meetings with her, I have concluded she is in agreement with this definition.

Small industries—whether service or manufacturing—do not have the time, expertise or financial resources to develop access to occupational safety and health services. These three points then, are the routes of access to small industries:

Editor's note: Owing to a lack of time, this part of the program (ie, "ERC Support for Small Industries") was not presented. However, inasmuch as this paper had been prepared and submitted for publication by the author in advance of the meeting, it is being enclosed as a formal part of the Proceedings.

provide the expertise,
replace their time with that of the ERC staff and students, and
obtain the financial resources through a grant or contract mechanism.

I know that is easier for me to **say** than for you to **accomplish**. Some ERC's were recently funded through OSHA's New Directions program, without tremendous success. This is no reason not to try again. Perhaps the next time they should be in direct contact with workers and organized groups of workers. The OSHA Regional Office for New Directions should be able to help with funding and information.

Small plants can help ERC's by allowing access to their places of business and employees, as well as by acquainting students with business responsibilities and problems. One business leader told me that he is required to complete 23 different federal forms; he thought some smart student could combine all of them into one, since most of the information was repetitious. Wouldn't that make a nice master's thesis?

Dr. Weill and Mr. Breyse suggested earlier the importance of a good baseline occupational toxic exposure history on all workers. I have developed a model history form for this in my new book, THE OCCUPATIONAL PHYSICIAN IN INDUSTRY, which I hope will be published soon. Wouldn't this make a good project—for a student to go out and take baseline histories of past worker exposures?

What about farmers in ERC areas? All farmers regardless of their acreage think of themselves as small business. Almost anything you do for them is appreciated.

A little innovative initiative will produce a number of low cost, little labor, short time activities for students that will benefit the ERC as well as small businesses. For instance,

OSH record systems, preventive health services, hypertension, weight maintenance (nutrition), immunization, tuberculosis testing, occupational and reproductive history taking, work-site assessment (walk-through plant surveys), safety meetings, food and water inspections, first-aid training, and interpretation of federal, state, and local regulations affecting small businesses.

These are only a few of the relatively "easy" projects that will develop leadership and familiarization with the work environment. All health professionals need to take off their white uniforms and business clothes and learn first-hand the conditions under which 90% of American workers labor.

My last suggestion for ERC's is to develop out-reach programs with academic credit for physicians, nurses, industrial hygienists, safety professionals, business leaders and labor leaders. These individuals should first be given academic credit for what they already know and then by attending classes at night and on weekends in high schools, at the plant site, hotels—anywhere—they can develop academic expertise in the field of occupational safety and health. This is the fastest way to increase and update professional knowledge. After all, isn't education what colleges and universities do best?

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