



# MMWR™

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### Workers' Memorial Day — April 28, 2002

April 28, 2002, has been designated Workers' Memorial Day to remember workers who have died from occupational injuries or diseases. Although workers in the United States are experiencing substantial improvements in occupational health and safety (1), occupational injuries and fatalities continue to occur.

During 1980–1998, approximately 109,000 civilian workers died from work-related injuries, an average of 16 deaths per day (CDC, unpublished data, 1998). In 1998, 3.6 million workers were seen in hospital emergency departments in the United States because of injuries that occurred on the job (2). In 2000, costs of fatal and nonfatal unintentional work-related injuries were an estimated \$131.2 billion (3).

Workers' Memorial Day can serve as a reminder of the need to continue efforts to reduce the burden of work-related injuries and illnesses. Data and research findings on occupational injuries and illnesses can help focus such efforts. This issue of *MMWR* presents three reports of work-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths.

Information about causes and prevention of work-related injury and disease is available from CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, telephone 800-356-4674, or at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>.

#### References

1. CDC. Improvements in workplace safety—United States, 1900–1999. *MMWR* 1999;48:461–9.
2. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Worker health chartbook, 2000. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, CDC, 2000 (DHHS [NIOSH] publication no. 2000-127).
3. National Safety Council. Injury Facts, 2001 Edition. Itasca, Illinois: National Safety Council, 2002.

### Fixed Obstructive Lung Disease in Workers at a Microwave Popcorn Factory — Missouri, 2000–2002

In May 2000, an occupational medicine physician contacted the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MoDHSS) to report eight cases of fixed obstructive lung disease in former workers of a microwave popcorn factory. Four of the patients were on lung transplant lists. All eight had a respiratory illness resembling bronchiolitis obliterans with symptoms of cough and dyspnea on exertion, had worked at the same popcorn factory (factory A) at some time during 1992–2000, and had spirometric test results that were lower than normal for both FEV<sub>1</sub> (forced expiratory volume in 1 second) and FEV<sub>1</sub>/FVC (forced vital capacity) ratio. Employment durations ranged from 8 months to 9 years. MoDHSS requested assistance from CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in evaluating factory A for respiratory hazards to workers. This report summarizes the epidemiologic findings motivating the technical assistance request and preliminary results. The findings of this investigation indicate that workers exposed to flavorings at microwave popcorn factories are at risk for developing fixed obstructive lung disease. Public health authorities, employers, and health-care providers are collaborating to prevent obstructive lung disease in popcorn factory workers.

At factory A, soybean oil, salt, and flavorings are mixed into a large heated tank in a process that produces visible dust,

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