

Occupational Burn Surveillance in Kentucky

Contributed by: Amy Scheerer, MSPH, Tim Struttman, MSPH, Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center and Michael Auslander, DVM, MSPH, Kentucky Department for Public Health.

Occupational burns place a tremendous burden on the workforce, the medical community, and employers in Kentucky. To address this issue, the staff at the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC), in cooperation with the Kentucky Department for Public Health, will establish a statewide occupational burn surveillance system to identify causes and trends and to monitor progress toward reducing these injuries. Data collection will begin in January, 1998 with funding renewable for five years. Kentucky is one of two states funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to conduct occupational burn surveillance.

This project will build upon an existing occupational injury surveillance structure at KIPRC and expand capacity to include work-related burn injuries. The project objectives are to: 1) identify the incidence of burns as an occupational injury; 2) quickly identify trends in burn cases; 3) develop and implement interventions to reduce the incidence of burn injury; and 4) evaluate the economic savings of interventions. In addition, surveillance activities will promote the collaborative and cooperative efforts of local public health departments, hospitals, research organizations, community members, and agencies with interests in occupational safety.

Case definition: A person who suffers a thermal, electrical, chemical, friction, or radiation burn in the course of work and seeks medical treatment. Cases of work-related burns will be identified primarily through hospital burn units, emergency departments, Kentucky Department of Workers' Claims, Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance (KEMI), and death certificates. Data will be used to generate presentations and publications such as hazard alerts, newsletters, case reports, and prevention materials for dissemination to interested groups and individuals, including: workers and employers, trade organizations, health professionals, public agencies, and the general public via news media.

The medical community, most notably private physicians and emergency department personnel, is in an excellent position to notify KIPRC of work-related burn cases presenting for treatment. Only through the active involvement of medical providers can this project succeed in identifying and ultimately reducing the incidence of these traumatic injuries.

To report cases or to obtain further information, please contact Amy Scheerer, Project Manager, at 606-257-4955 or 800-204-3223.

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