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Development of a followback program for NIOSH health hazard evaluations

Allison Tepper, PhD, Barbara Jenkins, MA, and David Sundin. Division of Surveillance, Hazard Evaluations, and Field Studies, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, R-10, 4676 Columbia Parkway, Cincinnati, OH 45226, 513-841-4386, atepper@cdc.gov

The 30th anniversary of NIOSH is a fitting time to look back at the work of the agency, and to describe and learn from its successes and failures. The health hazard evaluation (HHE) program has been a cornerstone in the agency's efforts to improve working conditions and prevent occupational illness and injury. Through the HHE program NIOSH has addressed emerging occupational hazards and revisited well-recognized hazards that remain poorly controlled in a variety of work settings throughout the country. Over the history of the program, short-term efforts have been undertaken to evaluate its effectiveness. The development of an on-going evaluation system, while recognized as an important gap in the program, was only recently begun. In October 1999, a formal followback component was added to the HHE program. The goals of the followback component are to provide feedback to improve NIOSH processes and products and to assess the effectiveness of HHEs in introducing or improving health and safety activities, reducing employee exposures, and improving worker health. Information is obtained through a series of followback questionnaires distributed to workers and managers at worksites at which an HHE was requested. Future plans include followback site visits. As of December 2000, NIOSH obtained followback information for 64 HHEs. Questionnaires have been completed by 159 (72%) of 222 individuals surveyed. This presentation will focus on information relating to the initial site visits done at 25 workplaces and on close-out letters and information sent for 39 workplaces where a site visit was not made.

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Presenting author's disclosure statement:

Organization/institution whose products or services will be discussed: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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