

National Occupational Research Agenda Sector Council Bulletin addressing the needs of Wholesale and Retail Trade for a safe future.

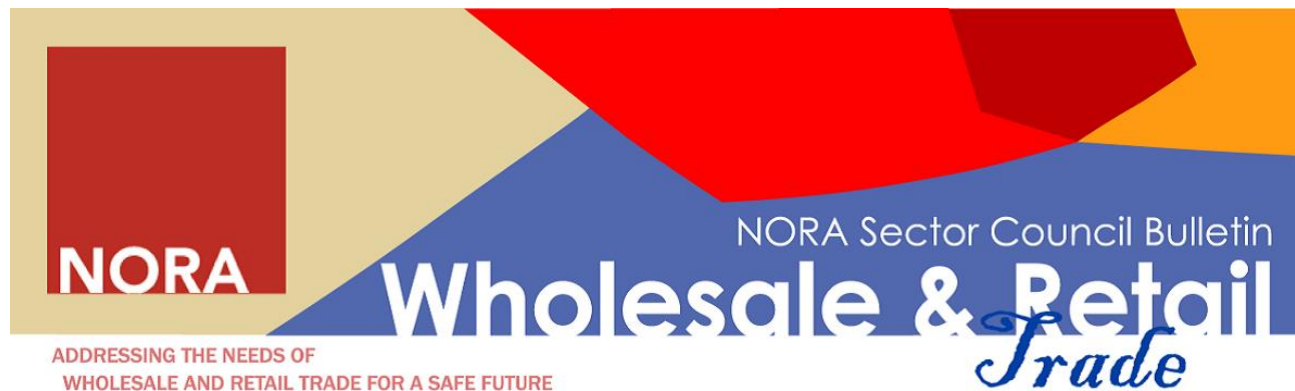
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Virtual WRT Sector Council Meeting

Thursday, May 17, 2018; 4:00-5:00 PM EST

Topics: Slips, Trips, Falls by Wayne S. Maynard, CSP, CPE

NORA Wholesale and Retail Trade Revised National Agenda



How might Total Worker Health® improve WRT businesses?

What is Total Worker Health®?

Total Worker Health (TWH) aims to protect employees from work-related safety hazards *while also* promoting their overall health and well-being. Since most of us spend at least a third of our day at work, it is no surprise that work can affect our health and well-being. In truth, the jobs we have and the day-to-day work we perform can strongly influence how healthy or unhealthy we are.

How do TWH approaches differ from workplace safety programs?

Safety programs attempt to identify and eliminate workplace hazards to prevent fatal and nonfatal injuries and illnesses. Fortunately, the majority of retail and wholesale businesses are typically free from serious hazards. Yet, retail and wholesale workers may struggle to stay healthy and experience well-being, especially during stressful holiday or other busy seasons. While TWH focuses first on workplace safety, it also examines how the **conditions of work** contribute to the health of workers both at work and away from work.

When it comes to health and well-being, we can all use more!

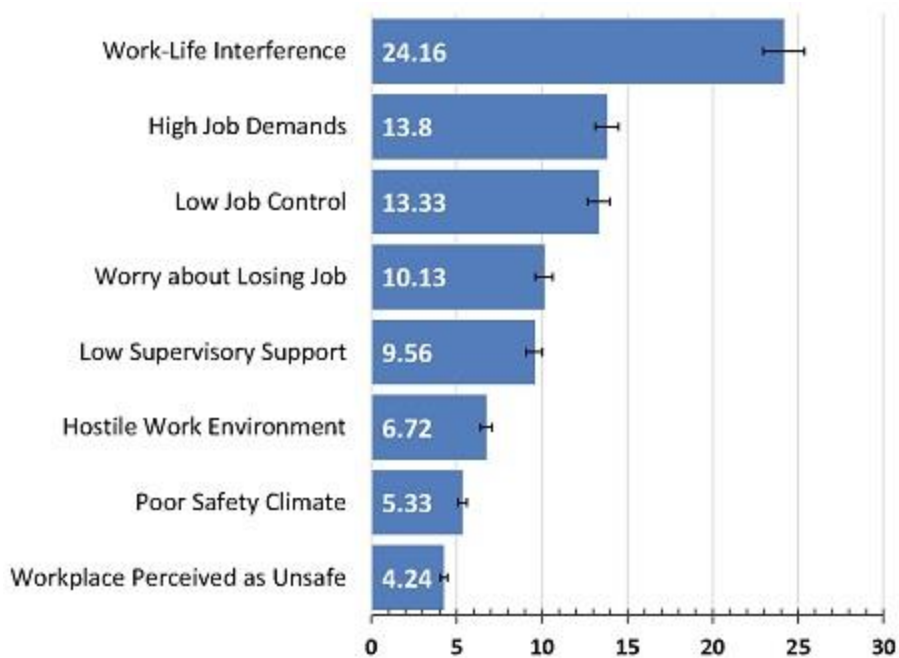


Figure 1. Prevalence of Psycho-social Occupational Exposures.

What work conditions most affect worker well-being?

Figure 1 provides a chart showing the prevalence of various work conditions that employees report as stressful. Stress is both a health hazard and a safety hazard. Stressed workers are at a higher risk of injury than employees who are not chronically stressed ([Nakata et al., 2006](#)). One of the most important work conditions involves the struggle to achieve a suitable **work-life balance** ([Hooker et al., 2011](#)).

Figure 1 data from *National Health Interview Survey, Occupational Health Supplement, 2015* provide an expanded list of adverse work conditions reported during the *Health Interview Survey*.

Investment in TWH programs can lead to positive health outcomes.

What are the costs associated with the TWH policies, programs, and practices?

Improvements in worker safety, health, and well-being do not necessarily require additional or costly investments, but they do require some changes in how employers interact with their workers. It starts with family-supportive supervisors who listen to their employees and who consider employees' viewpoints when making decisions about work conditions.

What are the benefits of TWH approaches?

Investments in TWH approaches are typically linked to positive work outcomes. These include improvements in productivity and reductions in injury/illness, absenteeism, and employee stress ([Anger et. al. 2015](#)).

In [Journey to Safety Excellence](#), the National Safety Council (NSC) provides a compelling illustration of the positive value to companies investing in promoting safety and health ([NSC 2013](#)). The NSC document is

also useful for larger retailers who require financial evidence to convince corporate-level decision-makers of the value of investing in health and safety.



Figure 2. Employers with a healthy work culture, ensure healthy people in healthy workplaces.

How would an employer begin implementing TWH policies, programs, and practices?

Workplaces are unique and the experiences of the people who manage and work in them differ widely. Likewise, when it comes to safety and health tools, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. NIOSH recognized this when developing the workbook, [Fundamentals of Total Worker Health Approaches: Essential Elements for Advancing Worker Safety, Health and Well-being](#) [NIOSH No. 2017-112]. The workbook aims to help employers provide a snapshot of where their organization is on a path to TWH, identifies initial steps to improve their workforce's safety, health, and well-being, and measures its progress. You can find this workbook [here](#). Start by downloading the [organizational assessment and action plan](#).

Below are some examples of approaches that could support a strong TWH program.

- Design work schedules and patterns to increase worker control when possible; provide more flexibility and quicker notice of schedules or schedule changes
- Build safer, more comfortable work spaces; pay attention to ergonomics in workstation design and use
- Improve the workplace environments (better breakrooms, restrooms, and food storage and eating spaces)
- Provide fair compensation, sick leave, and affordable benefits that enhance health and well-being

- Cultivate leaders and values that encourage healthy supervision, respect for workers, and responsible business decisions
- Create policies and follow practices that are inclusive, accept workers' differences, and give workers a voice in conditions of their work

In summary

Retail employers who are seeking a new focus on employee safety, health, and well-being will find that the TWH approaches provide a useful framework for improving the work experience. The TWH approach encourages employers and workers to collaborate in designing safe and healthy workplaces. Such workplaces support all workers, regardless of their schedule or status, in their professional and personal health goals.

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