

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

Promoting productive workplaces
through safety and health research 

NIOSH eNews



Director's
Desk



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Monthly
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Update on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Response

New Resources


NIOSH Science Blogs

- Skin Irritation From Prolonged Use of Tight-Fitting Respirators
- How Collecting and Analyzing COVID-19 Case Job Information Can Make a Difference in Public Health

Case Investigation and Contact Tracing

CDC has published Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in Nonhealthcare Workplaces. This information will help employers understand how to collaborate with health departments during COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing.

Carpooling Infographic


CDC has developed an infographic  with suggestions for how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when carpooling to and from work.

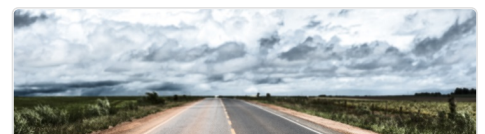
How and What to Communicate to Employees About COVID-19

CDC has published the COVID-19 Communication Plan for Select Non-healthcare Critical Infrastructure Employers. This document suggests how and what to communicate to employees, including communication channels and messages.

Upcoming Webinar

August 19, 2:00–3:30 p.m. (EDT): Sharing Science and Lessons Learned: COVID-19 and Wildfire


This webinar will present information about the current state of the science and lessons learned from the 2020 wildfire season. NIOSH speakers will provide an overview and updates on COVID-19, current CDC testing strategies and guidance, and current infection prevention procedures. Registration  for the webinar is required.



From the Director's Desk

John Howard, M.D. Director, NIOSH

International Overdose Awareness Day: August 31

As [International Overdose Awareness Day](#)  approaches, during a year of interlinked public health crises, NIOSH reflects on the work that has been done and the road ahead in the wake of the nation's overdose epidemic and the global COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2018, there were 67,367 drug overdose deaths in the United States. Of these deaths, 46,802 deaths, or 69%, were attributed to opioids. From 2012 to 2018, the rate of drug overdose deaths involving psychostimulants such as methamphetamine increased nearly five-fold, and overdose deaths involving cocaine tripled.¹ From 2011 to 2016, there was an annual increase of 24% in occupational drug overdose deaths.² Clinically diagnosed substance use disorders, including opioid use disorder, are medical and public health problems that can affect workers and conditions in the workplace. People without formal diagnoses of substance use disorders are also at risk for overdoses.

Substance use disorder can not only impact the ability to function safely at work, it can also hinder return to work following an injury or illness, which in turn may negatively affect a person's livelihood. Increased stress and anxiety and reduced coping strategies due to the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to increased alcohol and substance use, which could compound the impact of the overdose epidemic.^{3,4,5}

To respond to these growing risks among workers, NIOSH has worked diligently to provide information and resources for employers and workers on substance use, overdose prevention, and treatment. NIOSH also offers guidance on recovery and the role employers can play in addressing these issues, with particular emphasis on the opioid crisis. In response to the opioid epidemic, the NIOSH [Opioids in the Workplace](#) webpage has an abundance of resources ranging from [research](#) and [statistics](#) to guidance on [workplace naloxone use programs](#) and [medication-assisted treatment](#). Opioid use and overdose has also been examined in several recent [NIOSH Science Blogs](#).

NIOSH uses an approach that considers the "lifecycle" of opioid use as a framework. This framework includes identifying risk factors in the workplace that may predispose workers to opioid use disorder, determining conditions that may initiate opioid use, such as a workplace injury, and developing workplace practices and programs to prevent opioid overdose and support recovery. This approach is also aimed at developing strategies for protecting first responders and other frontline workers from unintentional exposure to



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opioids that may occur as part of their jobs. NIOSH also developed a [virtual toolkit](#) for first responders, who are often the frontline contacts for illicit drug and overdose calls, to provide resources to help keep them safe.

This framework aligns with the NIOSH *Total Worker Health*[®] principles that advocate for protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness prevention efforts to advance worker well-being, both on and off the job. Policies, programs, and practices that address the conditions of work should be considered as essential when protecting workers and advancing their health and well-being related to substance use.

A new initiative promoting [Workplace Supported Recovery](#) programs also launches this month to examine the critical role that employers and the workplace play in opioid use disorder and overdose prevention, treatment, and recovery.

The true impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath on workers, particularly those who use drugs or may [have opioid use disorder or other substance use disorders](#), are unknown. In light of the pandemic, NIOSH will continue its mission to develop new knowledge and advance worker well-being by examining the impact of COVID-19 on workers with opioid use disorder. Through this effort, we hope to better understand the challenges and needs of employers and employees and develop more resources that can assist with overcoming these dual public health crises. Later this month, a NIOSH Science Blog will explore the complex relationships between the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States opioid overdose epidemic, and worker safety, health, and well-being.

International Overdose Awareness Day is held every year on August 31 to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of drug-related deaths and to spread the message that deaths from drug overdose are preventable. Join us as we stand together, remembering those who have lost their lives to drug overdoses and supporting those affected by the overdose epidemic.

References

1. Hedegaard H, Minino AM, Warner M [2020]. Drug overdose deaths in the United States, 1999–2018. NCHS Data Brief No. 356, January 2020. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
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3. Henry BF, Mandavia AD, Paschen-Wolff MM, Hunt T, Humensky JL, Wu E, Pincus HA, Nunes EV, Levin FR, El-Bassel N [2020]. COVID-19, mental health, and opioid use disorder: old and new public health crises intertwine. *Psychol Trauma*. Advance online publication, June 18.
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Research Rounds

Inside NIOSH: Job Transfers Often Too Late to Prevent Progression to Severe Black Lung Disease in Coal Miners

Many coal miners with black lung disease who transferred to jobs with lower dust exposure still progressed to more severe forms of the disease, according to new research published in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. These findings indicate that coal miners may be transferring when it is already too late to prevent the disease from progressing.

Black lung disease, or pneumoconiosis, can cause severe shortness of breath and even death. Although the scarring lung disease cannot be cured, it can be prevented by avoiding exposure to coal mine dust. Under the NIOSH-administered [Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program](#), coal miners receive periodic chest X-rays to identify black lung disease in its early stages, before it progresses to severe disease. Miners with evidence of black lung on their chest X-rays are eligible to exercise their right, known as the "[Part 90 option](#)," to transfer to a position at the mine with lower dust exposures.

Investigators looked at chest X-rays for 513 coal miners across the United States who transferred under the Part 90 option from January 1, 1986, to November 21, 2016. All participants received chest X-rays from the [Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program](#) from January 1, 1981, to March 19, 2019. After transferring to a less dusty work environment, nearly one-third of miners with at least two chest X-rays subsequently developed more severe black lung disease. Compared to miners who did not develop more severe disease, these miners already had more advanced black lung disease before exercising their Part 90 option. These findings show the importance of identifying black lung as early as possible and minimizing further exposure to respirable coal mine dust. Because previous [research](#) shows that only about 14% of eligible miners exercise their rights under the Part 90 option, it is important to find ways to improve participation in the program.

More information is available:

- [NIOSH Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program](#)
- [U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 30, Part 90 Mandatory Health Standards—Coal Miners Who Have Evidence of the Development of Pneumoconiosis](#)

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Outside NIOSH:

No Small Task: Understanding Safety and Health Motivators in Small Businesses

What factors influence workplace safety and health behaviors? Past studies point to workers' personal motives or the companies' organizational climate. This refers to workers' perception of what practices a workplace rewards and supports. NIOSH-funded researchers at the [Center for Health, Work & Environment](#)  aimed to understand how these different factors interact to influence workers' safety and health behavior in small businesses.

Published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, the study analyzed survey data from 1,052 Colorado workers in 36 small businesses, mostly in the service industry, between April 2017 to May 2018. Researchers asked about their organizations' values and commitment to safety and worker well-being, and their own motivation to participate in workplace safety and worksite wellness. Data came from a larger research project focused on small organizations and worker safety, health, and well-being.

Focused on different drivers of workers' behavior, scientists found positive links between safety and health climate and behaviors. They also identified three important motivators: intrinsic or personal interest, awareness of the need for safety and health, and requirements to comply with safety and health practices. All three motivators impacted the actions of workers, suggesting there are multiple, distinct factors influencing behavior, as well as the environment. To improve safety and health outcomes, scientists recommend employers ask workers to rate the organization's commitment to safety and health from their perspective and incorporate a participatory approach and incentives when creating safety and health programs.

Because small businesses are often underrepresented in research and may have fewer resources to put toward implementing safety and health programs, these findings are critical. The study ultimately provides guidance for small businesses to assess both their safety and health practices and ways to improve safety and health climate.

More information is available:

- [Center for Health, Work & Environment](#) 
- [NIOSH Total Worker Health® Program](#)
- [NIOSH Centers of Excellence for Total Worker Health®](#)

Highlights

Join NIOSH and Partners for Safe + Sound Week, August 10–16

[Safe + Sound Week](#) is a nationwide event held each August that recognizes the successes of workplace health and safety programs. During August 10–16, NIOSH, the Occupation Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), CPWR—The Center for Construction Research and Training and other partners will join with workers and job creators for Safe + Sound Week to share information on how to keep America's workers safe. Workplace health and safety programs can identify and manage workplace hazards before they cause injury or illness.

Safe Lifting Infographic for Pregnant Workers Now Available in Spanish

How much can a healthy pregnant worker lift at work? NIOSH is aiming to address this question by proposing clinical guidelines with provisional recommended weight limits. A new Spanish language [infographic](#) shows how the proposed guidelines could be useful to occupational health practitioners in the evaluation and redesign of lifting tasks and to clinicians in advising patients about manual lifting restrictions at work.

Updated Software Makes It Easier to Model Fire and Contaminant Spread

The NIOSH Mining Program recently released an updated version of its [MFIRE software](#) to model fire and contaminant spread in underground mines. Originally released as a DOS-based program in 1977, the software has been completely rewritten in the C++ operating language and packaged into a dynamic link library (DLL). With this update, ventilation network data are obtained via common memory instead of the standard MFIRE data output files. The software's DLL can easily be used by other programs. Check out the link above to find out more!

New Guidance Released for Health Care Workers Potentially Exposed to Hepatitis C

On July 24, CDC published updated guidance on [Testing and Clinical Management of Health Care Personnel Potentially Exposed to Hepatitis C Virus](#) in *MMWR Recommendations and Reports*. CDC previously established recommendations for managing occupational exposures to bloodborne pathogens, including hepatitis C virus (HCV). This new algorithm incorporates current guidance and replaces the 2016 HCV testing algorithm for HCV-exposed HCP. CDC will host a webinar on August 6 at 1 p.m. (EDT) to brief public health partners and health care provider organizations on the new guidance. Find out more and [register](#) for the webinar.

NIOSH Seeks Surveillance Research Team Lead

NIOSH is currently looking for a GS -14 Research Epidemiologist ([all US citizens](#) or [merit promotion](#)) or Research Statistician ([all US citizens](#) or [merit promotion](#)) to serve as a team lead in the NIOSH laboratory in Morgantown West Virginia. The individual will lead a team of seven professionals who conduct applied surveillance research using a variety of occupational injury and fatality data systems. Research describes the burden, patterns and trends in occupational injuries and makes recommendations for worker safety. The Team Lead is also responsible for developing his or her own surveillance research activities within the Team. The position is open through August 17.

Monthly Features

New Communication Products & Reports

FACE Reports

- [Crab Fishing Vessel Capsizes and Drowns Three Crew Members—Oregon](#)

Health Hazard Evaluation Reports

- [Evaluation of Silica Exposures During Dowel Drilling](#) 

IDLH Value Profiles

- [Bromine Trifluoride](#) 
- [Chlorine Trifluoride](#) 
- [Ethylene Dibromide](#) 

Strategic Plan

- [NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety, Strategic Plan, 2020–2029](#) 

NIOSH Science Blog


- [Wholesale Recycling: High Rates of Injuries and Illnesses](#)
- [Safety Culture and Health Care](#)
- [The Role of Organizational Support and Healthy Work Design](#)
- [Measuring Workplace Risks across States](#)

Federal Register Notice

Approval Tests and Standards for Air-Purifying Particulate Respirators

The [notice](#)  was posted on April 14. Comments must be received by August 12.

Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health Meeting

The [notice](#)  was posted on July 13. The meeting will be held on August 26–27.

Reducing Fatigue Among Taxi Drivers

The [notice](#)  was posted on July 20. Comments must be received by September 18.

Proposed Project: Respiratory Protective Devices

The [notice](#)  was posted on July 20. Comments must be received by September 18.

Research Project to Evaluate and Control Hazards to Landscaping and Grounds Management Workers; Request for Participants

The [notice](#)  was posted on January 10. Letters of interest must be received by October 16.

National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA)

New Dates for 2020 National Safety Stand-Down

Save the date for the rescheduled [2020 National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction](#) during September 14–18, a cornerstone of the National Campaign to Prevent Falls in Construction. The National Safety Stand-Down raises fall hazard awareness across the country in an effort to stop fall fatalities and injuries. Follow #StandDown4Safety #StopFalls on social media or contact [Elizabeth Garza](#) for more information.

News from Our Partners

Recent Construction Safety and Health Publications Available

Highlights are now available from three recent journal articles from CPWR—The Center for Construction Research and Training:

- [Designing Occupational Safety and Health Training Materials for Clear Communication](#)
- [Efficacy of Text Messaging Apprentices to Reinforce Ergonomics and Safety Voice Training](#)
- [Using Unmanned Aerial Systems for Automated Fall Hazard Monitoring in High-rise Construction Projects](#)

Reducing Exposure to COVID-19 in Meat Processing and Packaging Facilities

OSHA recently released a [poster](#) outlining nine steps for workers in meat, poultry, and pork processing and packaging facilities to reduce their exposure to COVID-19. The poster suggests steps like staying home if sick, wearing protective equipment, and avoiding sharing equipment and tools.

New Educational Materials for Occupational Lead Poisoning

The [Georgia Occupational Health and Safety Surveillance Program \(GA-OHS\)](#) recently created occupational lead poisoning educational materials to share with employers, workers, and healthcare professionals. Intended for workers at high risk for lead exposure (battery manufacturing, scrap metal recycling, etc.), the materials include information on lead poisoning symptoms and ways to prevent lead exposure. GA-OHS is a NIOSH-funded [state surveillance program](#).

New Tool Available to Prepare and Respond to Extreme Heat

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released the [Heat & Health Tracker](#), an online tool to help emergency and public health planners prepare for and respond to extreme heat events. Users can search for information by county or zip code, create custom maps, view data snapshots, and access CDC guidance and resources. Follow #HeatSafety #BeatTheHeat on social media.

Wallet Card Available for Agricultural Workers

OSHA has created a [wallet card](#) for agricultural workers to carry. The card provides tips on staying safe from COVID-19 and about workers' rights to a safe workplace. There is also a number to report unsafe working conditions and safety and health violations. For more information, visit [OSHA's Workers webpage](#).

Free Resources to Improve Your Messaging

CDC has created a [Health Literacy webpage](#) with health literacy resources from various federal agencies and international organizations. Visit the webpage to learn what other agencies are doing about health literacy.

Conferences, Meetings, Webinars, & Events

This page provides a list of publicly available occupational safety and health related [conferences, meetings, webinars, and events](#) sponsored by NIOSH as well as other government agencies, and non-government agencies such as universities, professional societies, and organizations.

Follow NIOSH

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