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# Business & health

ADDRESSING PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

## MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH

Workplace fatalities, injuries, and illnesses cost the country billions of dollars every year. In its 2007 Workplace Safety Index, Liberty Mutual estimated that employers paid almost \$1 billion per week for direct workers' compensation costs for the most disabling workplace injuries and illnesses in 2005. Employers that implement effective safety and health management systems may expect to significantly reduce injuries and illnesses and reduce the costs associated with these injuries and illnesses, including workers' compensation payments, medical expenses, and lost productivity. In addition, employers often find that process and other changes made to improve workplace safety and health may result in significant improvements to their organization's productivity and profitability.

### Program Information

OSHA's On-Site Consultation Service offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses in all states across the country, with priority given to high-hazard worksites. Consultation services are totally separate from enforcement and do not result in penalties or citations.

Using a free consultation service largely funded by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), employers can find out about potential hazards at their worksites, improve their occupational safety and health management systems, and even qualify for a one-year exemption from routine OSHA inspections.

### Benefits

Knowledge of your workplace hazards and ways to eliminate them can only improve your own operations and the management of your firm. You will get professional advice and assistance on the correction of workplace hazards and benefit from on-site training and assistance provided by the consultant to you and your employees. The consultant can help you establish or strengthen an employee safety and health program, making safety and health activities routine considerations rather than crisis-oriented responses.

This program provides incentives and support to smaller, high-hazard employers to develop, implement and continuously improve effective safety and health programs at their worksite(s). The program recognizes employers who have demonstrated exemplary achievements in workplace safety and health by receiving a comprehensive safety and health consultation visit, correcting all workplace safety and health hazards, adopting and implementing effective safety and health management systems, and agreeing to request further consultative visits if major changes in working conditions or processes occur that may introduce new hazards.

### How To Get Started

Because consultation is a voluntary activity, you must request it. Your telephone call or letter sets the consulting machinery in motion. The consultant will discuss your specific needs with you and set up a visit



date based on the priority assigned to your request, your work schedule, and the time needed for the consultant to adequately prepare to serve you. OSHA encourages a complete review of your firm's safety and health situation; however, if you wish you may limit the visit to one or more specific problems.

For more information on the program, visit <http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/smallbusiness/consult.html>



## What can the Independence Health Department do for YOUR Business?

The Independence Health Department can assist with:

1. **Awareness Raising** using a wide variety of resources and techniques such as:
  - Pamphlets addressing various topics from emergency planning to decreasing the risk of heart disease
  - Displays about physical activity, nutrition, quitting smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, parenting and planning pregnancy, heart disease information
  - Fact sheets and electronic bulletins, pay stub messages.
2. **Education and Skill Building** opportunities for your workplace which include:
  - Presentations on topics of interest
  - Links to Public Health Nurses, and/or Registered Dietitians to help you plan and implement wellness programs of interest to your worksite
  - Access to other community partners who provide educational sessions about health
3. **Environmental Support** that encourages employees to be healthy at work:
  - Ready-to-use workplace health activities that encourage physical activity, healthy eating, healthy weights, smoke-free living, and stress reduction
  - Network with community resources for assistance in programming
4. **Policy Development:**
  - Public Health staff can assist in the development of health workplace policies as needed.
  - Provide sample policies (e.g.: flex time, healthy eating)

Please call the Health Department at 816-325-7185 to learn more.

## Injuries that Resulted in Time Lost From Work or School

During 2004–2007, an average of 15.7 million injuries were reported per year among employed persons. Half of these injuries resulted in time lost from work: 8% resulted in <1 day of time lost, 26% resulted in 1–5 days lost, and 16% resulted in ≥6 days lost. An average of 8.7 million injuries were reported per year among persons who attended school. Approximately one third of these injuries resulted in time lost from school: 9% resulted in <1 day of time lost, 22% resulted in 1–5 days lost, and 3% resulted in ≥6 days lost.

Source: Chen LH, Warner M, Fingerhut L, Makuc D. Injury episodes and circumstances: National Health Interview Survey, 1997–2007. Vital Health Stat 2009;10(241). Available at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_10/sr10\\_241.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_241.pdf). 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 % o i i T i l f s § T i l f w r † < d y 1 d d

### Handwashing Tips

Handwashing is one of the easiest and most effective ways to protect yourself from many infectious diseases.

You should wash your hands:

- When arriving at work
- After using the bathroom
- After smoking
- After sneezing
- After touching your hair, face, clothing
- After eating or drinking
- After taking off or before putting on a new pair of gloves
- Before handling food, especially ready-to-eat foods like salads and sandwiches
- After handling garbage
- After handling dirty equipment, dishes, or utensils
- After touching raw meats, poultry and fish
- Anytime you change tasks – go from one thing to another

The proper technique is:

- Wet your hands with warm running water.
- Lather with soap and scrub between fingers, on the backs of your hands, and under nails. Wash for at least 20 seconds.
- Dry hands. Use single-use paper towels or electric hand dryers.
- Use a paper towel when you turn off the tap.

Please post the “Wash Your Hands” signs in the restrooms at your workplace. If you would like to order more signs, please call 816-325-7185.