

Excerpts from JJ Keller's Online Weekly Updates

– ESH News and Alerts –



This information is current as of 3.28.2005

Survey results show factors motivating employers to comply with safety law

The UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published the results of a survey of over 1700 employers asking what factors motivated them to comply with health and safety law.

The results of the research will be used as part of an on-going process of prioritizing where and how interventions by HSE and Local Authorities are most effectively employed as part of delivering the Health and Safety Commission's strategy to 2010.

The current strategy used by HSE and Local Authorities for improving health and safety relies upon a mix of 'levers' — for example encouragement, persuasion, assistance, and enforcement. The research reported here sought to split organizations into discrete groups, and then map the degree of influence each lever might have.

In providing evidence that the influence of these levers for compliance varies between organizations, the research confirmed the value of regulators using a range of interventions. There was also evidence of a link between current attitudes to workplace health and safety and the likely impact of new incentives for improvements, as well as support for the targeting of interventions and communications.

Commenting on the research, HSE Director General Timothy Walker said: "This research shows that many employers understand the benefits of good standards of health and safety management and are well motivated to manage the risks they face. We need to understand these motivators and how they vary, for example according to industry sector, the size of an organization, and the attitudes of the current management towards health and safety.

The research shows that combining interventions — including advice and guidance, enforcement and persuasion — helps to reinforce the motivation for improving health and safety. That confirms the approach set out in our strategy.

A major motivator for employers is securing the business benefits of good standards of workplace health and safety; for example, 90 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that good health and safety is important for staff productivity and morale. Many also felt that their reputation is very important — 86 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that damage to their reputation could cause them to lose business, with 82 per cent feeling that they must comply with health and safety regulations to protect their reputation. No doubt this is why 80 per cent of respondents say they check their own health and safety standards if they hear about a notice or prosecution against a similar organization."

OSHA to inspect construction activities on weekends

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced the continuation of its region-wide special emphasis program aimed at reducing employee injuries and deaths in the construction industry resulting from falls, contact with overhead power lines, and the use of scaffolds.

Charles E. Adkins, CIH, OSHA regional administrator said, "Effective immediately, the initiative will operate in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. OSHA Area Offices will conduct extensive outreach to encourage voluntary compliance by employers and employees, and to increase community awareness of fall hazards and others related to scaffolds and overhead power lines."

During the last 10 years, 39 percent of the fatal and catastrophic incidents within the three-state area occurred in the construction industry. Falls accounted for 38 percent of the incidents and 17 percent were due to electrocutions. More than half of the electrocution fatalities involved contact with overhead power lines.

Adkins explained that an increasing number of contractors are conducting construction activities on weekends under the assumption that OSHA staff would not be working. Within the past seven years, 15 percent of the fall, scaffold, or overhead power line fatalities occurred on weekends and in 2004 half of the fatalities occurred on Saturdays. "This year, our agency will randomly select three months in which to conduct inspections of active construction worksites operating on weekends that have fall hazards, employee exposure to overhead power lines, and/or scaffolding hazards observed."

6th annual National Work Zone Awareness Week set

The sixth Annual National Work Zone Awareness Week (NWZAW) is scheduled to occur April 3-9, 2005. A national media event will occur on April 5, 2005, at 10:00 am near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge in Washington (on the Maryland side). The "motto" for the 2005 NWZAW theme of "enforcement" is "Slow Down or Pay Up". The State of Maryland will be the 2005 host and is in charge of the April 5 media event arrangements.

NWZAW (scheduled in the first or second week of April every year) is a national campaign that helps increase public awareness of work zone safety. It also brings to the attention of the motoring public and the media the fact that nearly 900 men, women and children are killed senselessly in work zones each year.

The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) partnered with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in December 1999 to conduct this event annually. Since then, many other partners have joined the cause, along with ATSSA chapters around the country. Local community activities help educate the nation on work-zone related injuries and fatalities and the hazards and dangers that can be encountered and avoided when driving through a roadway construction zone.

Learn more about the 2005 NWZAW effort at this website: <http://www.atssa.com/public/nwzaw.asp>.

Study: Workplace wellness programs show 16:1 return on investment

Health promotion in the workplace can positively affect the bottom line for companies and the waistline for employees, according to Brigham Young University researchers.

Their new study published in the latest issue of the journal "Preventive Medicine" explains that employees who participate in workplace health promotion programs miss fewer workdays than those who choose not to participate, with the decrease in absenteeism translating into a cost savings of nearly \$16 for each dollar spent on the program.

"This is just another reason companies should offer and encourage participation in wellness programs," said Steven Aldana, director of the research team and professor of exercise science at BYU.

Depending on a company's size, between 2.5 and 4.5 percent of the money spent on salaries goes to absent employees. By implementing wellness programs, Aldana estimates that companies can save millions of dollars annually.

"Companies are always looking for ways to reduce employee-related expenses," Aldana said. "Many corporations use health promotion programs as a reactionary effort to curtail ever-increasing, employee-related expenses of health care and lost productivity. This new information provides additional evidence why companies should help employees have healthy lifestyles."

Aldana's co-authors on the study include BYU professors Ray Merrill and Ron Hager, BYU graduate student Kristine Price and Aaron Hardy of the Washoe County School District in Reno, Nev. The study examined the health claims costs and absenteeism of 6,246 employees and retirees from the Washoe County School District in Reno over 6 years. Employees' participation in the school district's wellness program was associated with an estimated savings of more than \$3 million in absenteeism costs when compared with nonparticipants.

"The findings are important because, although investment in health promotion is not large, it has a large payback for organizations," said Nico Pronk, vice president of the HealthPartners Center for Health Promotion in Minneapolis. "Perhaps more importantly, it shows that such programs are able to keep people more functional and on-the-job. Although this is certainly important from an employer's perspective, the ultimate winner is the individual who enjoys better health on a daily basis."

Aldana is the author of "The Culprit and the Cure," a book that explains why people should adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle and how to do it. Most of his research looks at how best to reduce chronic diseases: diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer, the development of which is heavily influenced by a person's lifestyle choices.

"If we can get people to adopt a healthy lifestyle, their health will improve and they will live longer — death can be postponed by 10 to 20 years," Aldana said. "They will lose weight, experience less diabetes, dramatically lower their risk for cancer and considerably improve the quality of their lives."

NIOSH advisory board to meet on radiation and worker health

The Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health (ABRWH), of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), is holding a meeting on March 24 and 25, 2005 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Included in the agenda are discussions of scoring methodology, wrap up of the first 20 dose reconstructions, and the upcoming set of 18 dose reconstruction reviews status.

The ABRWH provides advice to the Secretary, HHS, on the following:

- Development of guidelines,
- Scientific validity and quality of dose reconstruction efforts, and
- Advising the Secretary on whether there is a class of employees at any Department of Energy facility who were exposed to radiation but for whom it is not feasible to estimate their radiation dose.

The meeting is open to the public, limited only by the space available. It is being held at the Hilton Cincinnati Netherlands Plaza, 35 West Fifth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-2899, telephone 513/421-9100, fax 513/651-3195. Times are 12 p.m.-4:30 p.m., March 24, 2005; 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., March 25, 2005.

** For more information on these articles, contact JJ Keller Online at <http://www.kelleronline.com> or by calling 800-230-4094.*