

The Safety & Health Advisor

Spring 2019



April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

The National Safety Council (NSC) has designated April as Distracted Driving Awareness Month. It's a national effort to recognize the dangers of this practice and eliminate preventable deaths. Every day, at least nine Americans die and 100 are injured in distracted driving crashes. Cell phones, dashboard touchscreens, voice commands and other in-vehicle technologies pose a threat to our safety. The consequences of those distractions are not worth the convenience they offer.

Every employer is encouraged to implement a cell phone policy that prohibits employees from using their cell phones while driving. Workplace safe driving policies and employee education can help protect your employees, your organization and your community. Sample policies and supporting materials are available for free on the NSC's website at:

<http://safety.nsc.org/safe-driving-kit>

The Kit Contains:

- Materials designed to share with employees year-round and reinforce company policies
- Videos
- Fact Sheets and FAQs
- Myth Busters
- Infographics
- Posters
- Survivor Advocate Stories
- Activities to Engage Employees
- Links to safe driving resources
- Ready-made communications to educate employees

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Safety Performance - Look to the Future

Have you been to a company which displays a large sign touting the number of days that have passed without an accident? Are these companies really safe, or just lucky? All too often organizations rely solely on looking to the past as an indicator of safety performance, and even promote "Safety Incentive" policies which may suppress employee reporting of incidents, and unsafe conditions & behaviors. Do these backward looking **lagging indicators** (Total lost work days, injuries/illness rates, number of fatalities, workers' compensation trends, etc.) really tell us what employers are doing to prevent accidents?

Consider the worker in this photo:



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Certainly all of us can agree that this is an extremely dangerous work practice, and would never want an employee working in this manner. But what if he has been doing this for years, and has never been injured? If we rely on looking back at those lagging indicators, an outside observer might be led to believe the company for which he works has safe work practices. It is also very likely that fellow employees, supervisors, and maybe even senior management have observed this behavior, and not taken corrective action. In effect, this inaction is telling the employee that management wants him to work this way. Sounds crazy, doesn't it? Yet all too often employees are working unsafely, because management is not looking at the right metrics.

So what should we be measuring? We know that investments in safety pay off directly through reduced injuries, wastes, and costs, and indirectly through employee engagement and improved culture. Safety-focused **leading indicators** provide a better insight at future performance and continuous improvement. There is a predictive value in these indicators, which can improve safety management and performance. These are some of the actions savvy managers use to measure safety within their organizations:

- Safe Observation Programs
- Job Safety Assessments
- Environmental, Safety, and Health Alerts & Communications
- Cardinal Safety Rules
- Critical Task Elimination
- Regular Safety Gemba Walks*
- Employee Safety Training & Education (safety huddles or toolbox talks)
- Safety Audits
- Risk Identification/Elimination

For further information on the value of leading indicators, check out this link:

<https://ergo-plus.com/leading-lagging-indicators-safety-preformance/>

Remember that management's response to incidents/accidents is critical in encouraging communication, transparency, and understanding

responsibilities. Learning about how an organization functions through evaluation of leading indicators is essential for maintaining safety. When a near – miss event occurs, does management view this as good fortune that no one was injured, or do they investigate the systemic root-causes that contributed to the event, to prevent recurrence? If management does nothing following a near – miss event, the underlying contributing conditions and behaviors will continue to exist. The next employee may not be so lucky.

Links:

<https://www.lean.org/LeanPost/Posting.cfm?LeanPostId=436>

<https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/9846-get-started-leading-indicators>

<https://www.nsc.org/work-safety/tools-resources/near-miss-reporting>

<https://incident-prevention.com/ip-articles/auditing-for-safety-improvement>

https://www.env.nm.gov/aqb/Proposed_Regs/Part_7_Excess_Emissions/NMED_Exhibit_18-Root_Cause_Analysis_for_Beginners.pdf

Aging Workforce Considerations

Today, one in every five American workers is over 65, and in 2020, one in four American workers will be over 55, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Although there is no consensus on the age at which workers are considered “older workers,” the aging workforce phenomenon is real. These demographic shifts have made the issue of healthier workers, especially those of advanced age, much more pressing. Aging is a relevant process experienced by all workers throughout their life. Vital to any workplace is the safety, health and well-being of workers, from their first day on the job to their last.¹

Workplaces, often out of necessity, have adapted to older workers. Workplace design, the flexibility of the work schedule and certain ergonomic interventions increasingly focus on the needs of older employees. Many workplace accommodations are easy to make and are inexpensive.

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Modern orthotics, appropriate flooring and seating, optimal lighting, and new information technology hardware and software can smooth the way to continued highly productive work for older individuals. New emphasis on job sharing, flexible work schedules, and work from home can support added years in the job market for many.

Below are some strategies for preparing your workplace for a healthier, safer, and more age-friendly workforce. Consider putting these strategies in place today:

- **Prioritize workplace flexibility.** Workers prefer jobs that provide more flexibility over those that offer more vacation days. To the extent possible, give workers a say in their schedule, work conditions, work organization, work location, and work tasks.
- **Match tasks to abilities.** Use self-paced work, self-directed rest breaks and less repetitive tasks.
- **Avoid prolonged, sedentary work.** Prolonged, sedentary work is bad for workers at every age. Consider sit/stand workstations and walking workstations for workers who traditionally sit all day. Provide onsite physical activity/wellness opportunities or connections to low-cost community options.
- **Manage hazards.** Including noise, slip/trip hazards, and physical hazards – conditions that can challenge an aging workforce more.
- **Provide and design ergo-friendly work environments.** Workstations, tools, floor surfaces, adjustable seating, better illumination where needed, and screens and surfaces with less glare.
- **Utilize teams and teamwork strategies** For aging-associated problem solving, workers closest to the problems are often best equipped to find the fix.
- **Provide health promotion and lifestyle interventions** including physical activity, healthy meal options, tobacco cessation assistance, risk factor reduction and screenings, coaching, and onsite medical care. Accommodate medical self-care in the workplace and time away for health visits. [Total Worker Health®](#) is defined as policies, programs, and practices that integrate protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness prevention efforts to advance worker well-being.
- **Invest in training and building worker skills** and competencies at all age levels. Help older employees adapt to new technologies, often a concern for employers and older workers.
- **Proactively manage reasonable accommodations and the return-to-work process** after illness or injury absences.
- **Require aging workforce management skills training for supervisors.** Include a focus on the most effective ways to manage a multi-generational workplace.

Older drivers, many of whom work part-time at our insured auto dealerships, bring extensive skills, knowledge, and experience built over the course of a lifespan. Research shows that older drivers are more likely than their younger counterparts to adopt safe behaviors such as wearing a seat belt and complying with speed limits. However, those age 55 and older have twice the risk of dying in a work-related crash than younger workers do. One possible reason is that older persons are more likely to be injured if they are in a crash, and more likely to die if they are injured.

This fact sheet (link below) gives employers and workers information on age-related physical and mental changes that may affect driving.

[Older Drivers in the Workplace: How Employers and Workers Can Prevent Crashes](#)

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1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Journal of Occupational and Environmental
Medicine, Volume 55 May 2013

NIOSH Air Purifying Respirators

A new NIOSH publication, [*A Guide to Air-purifying Respirators*](#), provides information on selecting an appropriate respirator based on the environment and contaminants in a particular situation. The guide was published to emphasize the importance of the proper use of NIOSH-approved N95 filtering facepiece respirators in the workplace.

The agency's new guide includes information on filtering facepiece respirators, elastomeric half facepiece respirators, elastomeric full facepiece respirators, and powered air-purifying respirators. Air-purifying respirators remove gases, vapors, aerosols, or a combination of contaminants from the air using filters, cartridges, or canisters. NIOSH notes that these respirators cannot be used in an atmosphere that is oxygen-deficient or immediately dangerous to life or health because they do not supply oxygen from other than the working atmosphere.

Workplace Naloxone Use Program

The ongoing opioid crisis has raised concerns with employers regarding what actions they can or should take, if opioid misuse or overdose occurs at their business. Moreover, the impact this epidemic has on the work force is startling; according to the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, in the last seven years, opioids have kept more than 32,700 people from participating in the Massachusetts labor force. Another 143,000 Massachusetts employees have missed more than two (2) weeks of work because of pain reliever misuse.¹ The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports 1,945 opioid related deaths statewide in 2017.²

Facing these challenges, employers are asking whether they should include opioid emergency treatment sprays (Naloxone, also known as Narcan) within First Aid/Emergency Kits. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/NIOSH provides guidance for

employers considering a Workplace Naloxone Program:

www.cdc.gov/features/naloxone-workplace/index.html

www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2019-101/pdfs/2019-101-508.pdf?id=10.26616/NIOSH PUB2019101

Massachusetts employers can also find training resources for Narcan through this link:

www.mass.gov/service-details/training-resources-for-narcan

1. www.telegram.com/news/20181114/opioid-epidemic-costing-massachusetts-employers-billions
2. www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/02/12/Opioid-related-Overdose-Deaths-by-City-Town-February-2019.pdf

Spring 2019 Safety Conferences

*It's time to mark your calendars for the 6th Annual OSHA Summer Summit to be held on **Wednesday, June 19, 2019** at the Campus Center of UMASS Amherst.*



Registration is open and is being handled by the Safety Council of Western New England at www.scwne.org. Previous Summit's had a large number of safety related vendor booths and both general and breakout sessions for a number of current safety topics. This event has sold out early in prior years and that is expected to be the case again this year, so don't delay. It will be a day of quality safety and health training and networking!

If you need assistance in evaluating your ergonomics or safety and health program, please contact Neal Freedman, John Cotnam, Mark Hickox or Rick Muller from Atlantic Charter's Safety and Health Department at (617) 488-6500.