



National Safety
Management
Society

DIGEST

Updating Members on Safety Management News

August 2008

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Welcoming Our New 2008 NSMS Members

On behalf NSMS President Roosevelt, the NSMS Executive Committee and the NSMS Board of Directors, we like to thank all members who have proactively renewed their 2008 membership to the National Safety Management Society. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome the following new members to our Society:

- **John B. David**, Safety Officer – Zeb Nigeria Limited (Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria)
- **Hussein Ahmed El-Turkey**, HSE Manager – DSD-Ferrometalco Egypt (Cairo, Egypt)
- **Anthony Krah**, Managing Director – Kraye Tech Ghana (Tema, Greater Accra Region, Ghana).
- **Pantelis Papoutsis**, Safety Facilitator – Carpenter Technology Corporation (Reading, Pennsylvania).
- **Edward L. Randall**, Vice President/Safety Manager – New Concepts, Inc. (Albuquerque, New Mexico).
- **Harrish Kumar Reddy**, Radiation Safety Officer – Al-Thurya Radiaiton service Company (Khetian City, Kuwait)
- **Robert A. Rokita**, Risk Manager – Harmony Skilled Network (Simi Valley, California)

We appreciate your interest in furthering your skills, knowledge and abilities in the management of safety and risks, as well as your interest to networking and professional development. Welcome again to NSMS!

Election Ballots Forthcoming for NSMS Board of Directors Openings

Nominations have been received and we appreciate our members' interest and commitment to help serve on the Board and contribute to the Society's growth and needs of our membership. This leadership role is critical to help chart the strategic direction for our Society and address members' professional development. The electronic ballots will be distributed to all current dues-paying members in September, 2008.

SPECIAL ADVANCED ANNOUNCEMENT:

Planning is Underway . . .

**NATIONAL SAFETY MANAGEMENT SOCIETY
Special Professional Development Program
Tentatively - November 2008
New Orleans, Louisiana
Houston Texas**

“Enhancing Safety Stewardship: Regulatory Update, Best Practices and Leadership Development”

Please join the National Safety Management Society for a **Regional Safety Program** tentatively planned for New Orleans LA/Houston TX. Based on interest and demand, this event is spearheaded by NSMS President Roosevelt Smith and is geared toward broadening the safety skills, knowledge and abilities of front line supervisors, managers and administrators in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving programs for worker safety, security, compliance and environmental protection in onshore and offshore oil and gas operations, as well as general industry. More details to come.

Conference Registration Fee: (includes lunch and program materials).

The NSMS “Blog” is Here

Steve Geigle has created and launched the “NSMS Blog” on the NSMS website. It will allow members and others to post comments, remarks and initiate discussions about a variety of safety management topics and issues. You can participate in the Blog by going to the NSMS website (<http://nsms.us>) and look for the link on the home page along the left-hand column of navigation areas.

FREE ACCESS: Online Certified Safety and Health Manager (CSHM) Educational and Exam Preparation Reference Materials

As a benefit for our current and future dues-paying members, NSMS is **permanently** offering free access to the Certified Safety and Health Manager (CSHM) preparation and educational materials. The online resources, created by NSMS member Steve Geigle, can be found at www.cshmprep.com and the only action an NSMS member needs to take is to email Steve requesting access from that website. You will need to include your current NSMS member number (found on your membership card and certificate). Once the number is verified, you will be granted a username and password to access the online reference materials. This is a great opportunity to brush up on your safety management and technical knowledge and prepare for a successful passing of the CSHM certification examination.

Hispanic Workers Dying at Higher Rates Than Others

Hispanic workers face a greater risk of dying from work-related injuries, with one in three deaths occurring in the construction industry, U.S. health officials said Thursday. Between 1992 and 2006, 11,303 Hispanic workers died from work-related injuries. This represents approximately 13 percent of all work-related deaths in the United States during that time, a higher rate than for white or black workers, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Work-related fatalities are going down for the workforce in general, but the disparity between Hispanic and non-Hispanic is persistent and not going away," Dr. Sherry Baron, coordinator of the Occupational Health Disparities Program at the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, said during a teleconference.

"In 2006, the rate was 25 percent higher in Hispanics compared to all workers," Baron said. "Most striking is the especially high rate for foreign-born Hispanic workers. Foreign-born Hispanic workers had a 70 percent higher rate of work-related injury deaths compared to native-born Hispanic workers," she said.

According to previous CDC research, Hispanic workers are at greater risk because of language and cultural barriers and inadequate training and supervision. And while the immigration status of the workers in the new study couldn't be ascertained, it may also have played a role, Baron said. "As with all workers who are in a marginal economic situation, immigrant workers may be afraid to speak up about safety concerns because of fears of retaliation," she said.

Hispanics represent the fastest growing segment of the U.S. workforce. In 2006, approximately 19.6 million U.S. workers were Hispanic. Of these, 56 percent were foreign-born, according to a report in the June 6 issue of the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

The average age of Hispanic workers who died from work-related injuries was 35, compared with 42 for other workers. Also, 95 percent of Hispanics who died were men.

Except for 1995, the annual rate of work-related deaths among Hispanic workers was greater than for all other U.S. workers. In 2006, deaths among Hispanic workers were 5.0 per 100,000, compared with 4.0 per 100,000 for white workers, and 3.7 per 100,000 for black workers, according to the report.

From 1992 to 1996, homicide was the most common cause of death among Hispanic workers. These were mainly deaths that occurred during workplace robberies, Baron said. Between 1997 and 2006, highway accidents were the most common cause of death. These included traffic fatalities and workers killed while during roadwork.

But from 2000 to 2006, falls were the most common cause of deaths among Hispanic workers. From 1992 to 2006, work-related homicides among Hispanics dropped by 37 percent. However, during the same time frame, deaths from falls increased approximately 370 percent.

Among Hispanic workers who died between 2003 and 2006, 67 percent were born outside the United States, with 70 percent coming from Mexico.

High-risk jobs, such as construction, were one of the main factors leading to higher death rates among Hispanic workers. From 2003 to 2006, most Hispanics who died from work-related injuries worked in construction (34 percent). Other jobs with high death rates for Hispanics included administrative and waste services (11 percent), agriculture/forestry/fishing/hunting (10 percent), and transportation/warehousing (10 percent), the report found.

The greatest number of deaths were in California (773), followed by Texas (687) and Florida (417). The highest rates of deaths among Hispanic workers were in [South Carolina](#), with 22.8 deaths per 100,000; Oklahoma with 10.3 deaths per 100,000; Georgia with 9.6 deaths per 100,000; and Tennessee with 8.9 deaths per 100,000, according to the CDC.

To prevent work-related deaths among Hispanics, employers need to provide a safer working environment, and government safety and health agencies need to provide Hispanic workers with safety information and to ensure that worksites comply with existing safety regulations, Baron said.

The CDC also thinks there is a need to develop better and "culturally appropriate" materials to overcome language barriers and varying levels of literacy, Baron said.

Keep It Safe - Working From Home

Technology has made it possible to do many jobs at home rather seamlessly. An increasing number of companies are offering "telework" as an option, especially given the increasing need for flexible work arrangements, the rising cost of fuel, and environmental concerns of commuting.

Where working from home is an option, don't forget to address all workplace health and safety concerns.

Here are some things to consider:

Workstation - Just like in the office, a home-based workstation must include an appropriate, quality desk and chair adjusted to suit the worker's body dimensions. The keyboard must be at the right height so that arms and wrists are in a neutral position. Lighting must also be sufficient, with minimal reflection or glare.

Scheduling - Believe it or not, the most common problem with telework is not that the job doesn't get done. On the contrary, many teleworkers find they forget to take breaks! Without the natural breaks of meeting with co-workers or walking to a printer, the teleworker tends to spend long periods in the same position, doing repetitive motions that may lead to musculoskeletal injuries.

Work environment -The work environment must be free of hazards such as poorly positioned cords or wires, or ungrounded or overheated electrical equipment.

Emergency measures - Teleworkers, just like workers at the company site, should have smoke alarms, access to a fire extinguisher, a carbon monoxide detector, an evacuation plan, first aid supplies, and other measures in place for their safety.

Responsibilities - Your company occupational health and safety policy should outline who is responsible for health and safety issues and worker's compensation if the teleworker is injured. A company representative must ensure the work environment is safe, and stay in touch with the worker. As for the worker, he or she must report accidents or injuries to their supervisor, just as workers at the company site are required to do. Put these details in writing to avoid any confusion, especially in the event of a compensation claim. In this agreement also state which parts of the home are considered "the workplace", and indicate that the employer or a health and safety committee representative has the right to access this area of the employee's home to conduct a health and safety inspection.

You might want to implement a telework arrangement on a trial basis at first, to make sure it works for both the employee and the company. By formally addressing important issues up front, in writing, you can help your staff work safely and productively from home.

MANAGING TO SUCCEED: Four (4) Things Managers Do to Stifle Growth (By Lauryn Franzoni, Vice President and Executive Editor of ExecuNet's Center for Executive Careers)

In today's business climate, growth is essential to survival. So the last thing any company needs is a manager who stifles growth. And yet, all too many managers smother the ideas, challenges and self-analysis that feed growth. Managers who do this on purpose are beyond redemption. But stifling behavior is often the product of innocent motives and botched interpersonal relations.

Are you one of the managers who engages in such behavior? Here's a four-part test to help you spot-and thus avoid-the common interpersonal mistakes that stifle growth.

1. Do You Kill Ideas Before You Understand Them?

Ideas are the seed of growth. Some of the best ideas come from the lower echelons of the company. A big part of the manager's job is to receive and process these ideas, filter out the bad ones and pass along the good ones. Unfortunately, not all managers do this effectively. The most common mistake is to kill an idea without first making the attempt to understand it. Although the idea might sound silly, it might simply be poorly expressed. There might be a viable vision at its core. Managers should try to get at this core before pooh-poohing the idea.

If you want to foster growth, you need to open yourself up to new thinking and be patient with how ideas are expressed. If an idea strikes you as illogical or nonsensical, ask yourself this question: "Why would a rational person propose such an idea?" Remember that these are the people you work with - the people you probably hired and whose opinions you trust. So give them the benefit of the doubt before writing off what they have to say.

Ultimately, you might still conclude that the idea is wrong or even silly. That's fine-as long as you arrive at this conclusion through listening and probing rather than through jumping.

2. Do You Force Your Own Ideas on Others?

One of the worst offenses managers can commit is to be too adamant about their own ideas. Enthusiasm and self-confidence are laudable qualities. But when you're in a position of power, these qualities can come across to subordinates as intimidating. That's a big problem because even the best ideas need to be challenged. So if your subordinates are too cowed to question or test your ideas, you lose the chance to improve good ideas and screen out bad ones before taking them to the next level of the company.

How can you present ideas with enthusiasm and conviction but without deterring response from others? Be open to the fact that your idea may be incomplete or even wrong. Make it safe for others to express opposing views. Don't harangue. Stop after you've presented your initial idea, ask for feedback and then listen.

3. Do You Pay Excessive Attention to Pet Projects?

Another common mistake managers make is to allocate too much of their time to a project that they care deeply about but that doesn't really fit into the company's key strategies and that isn't widely supported by others in the company. Stubborn advocacy of an unrealistic idea creates a strategic blind spot that leads to fractured focus and limited growth.

To avoid this pitfall, don't try to muscle through ideas. Build support for them instead. Getting an idea adopted requires teamwork and energy. If you can't build teamwork and inspire energy for the idea, don't push it.

4. Do You Make Decisions Without Involving the Right People?

Knowing when and how to involve people in decision-making is the hallmark of good leadership. The first step is to recognize your options. Managers can lead their subordinates in one of two ways: they can issue commands or consult with those who have to implement the mandate. The latter involves asking for ideas, taking all views into consideration and then making the final decision. A variation on this theme is to reach decision via consensus.

I'm not here to tell you which decision-making model to use. What I am here to tell you is that you need to be aware of the options and select the one that makes the most sense in your circumstance. For example, don't insist on consensus building when nobody cares about the decision or there are too many people involved to reach a consensus. Conversely, don't make a command decision when everyone is affected, has a valid opinion and wants a say.

Conclusion

Remember that your company is counting on you, as a manager, to get the most from your people. That includes not just the ideas your subordinates may have but their reaction and tempering influence to your own ideas. The four mistakes I've just discussed undermine managers' capacity to get the best from their people and thereby stunt the company's growth and the manager's own career success. Be attuned to these mistakes and you probably won't make them yourself.

Job Stress Major Cause of Workers' Depression (By Orietta Guerrero, Fairfax Digital – theage.com.au, June 2, 2008)

High work demands are to blame for more than 21,000 cases of depression in Victoria each year, according to a new Melbourne University study. The study, led by the university's Associate Professor Tony LaMontagne, found that almost one in six cases of depression among working Victorians were caused by job stress.

Associate Professor LaMontagne said employers — including Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, who last week warned reportedly overworked public servants that they should expect their work load to only increase — must be mindful of the strain unreasonable work demands can have on workers' mental health. He said unless moves were made to moderate job demands and provide support for supervisors and colleagues to better understand the problem, mental health issues would continue to put enormous pressure on the public purse through Medicare.

"(Jobs) can be challenging. I'm not talking about making it easy for everybody, people don't necessarily want that," Associate Professor LaMontagne, from the university's VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Community Wellbeing, said.

"But the demands need to be reasonable. If you don't do that what we're going to end up with is more people out of work."

The study found 17% of working women suffering depression could attribute their condition to job stress, compared with 13% of working men with depression.

Workers in low-skilled jobs are also twice as likely as those in higher-skilled professions to experience job stress. "The most disadvantaged people in society — and the ones with the least resources to counter it — are the most likely to be affected by the problem," Associate Professor LaMontagne said.

While workers face many pressures in the workplace, job stress was defined as a combination of high job demands and little control over how the job gets done.

To estimate the proportion of depression caused by work pressures, researchers analysed job stress data from a 2003 phone survey of 1100 Victorian workers, and then combined the figures with previous research that shows that job stress doubles the risk of depression.

The study also suggested the workers' compensation system is not well-equipped to deal with the issue, with the number of people suffering depression in the workplace under-represented in compensation statistics.

Vic Health chief executive Todd Harper said employers needed to do more to prevent workplace-related mental health problems. "Given so many people spend a large part of their day at work, we need to find the best ways workplaces can promote good health rather than cause health problems," he said.

New Safety Challenge Arises as Workforce Ages

Business can help mitigate their losses by improving policies and workplace design allowing employees to continue to work in a safe and healthy environment, according to Tina Minter, a loss control specialist at the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that even though injury rates among older workers are lower than their younger counterparts, other factors can contribute to increased health and safety exposures, including age-related chronic disorders and diseases, loss of hearing, impaired vision, and physical and cognitive limitations.

Minter advises businesses to take action to address these risk factors. Some examples include:

- Allow for flexible work hours so that those with poor night vision can adjust their start and finish time to coincide with daylight hours;
- Encourage employees to use the health care system for preventative well visits;
- Encourage employees working at a computer to take small breaks every 30 minutes; and
- Eliminate heavy lifts, elevated work from ladders and long reaches.

"Employers should include older workers in the design process and seek outside professionals for assistance in adapting the workplace, training, and human resources policies to fit the aging workforce," said Russell Dronne, a Chubb loss prevention specialist based in New York.

Workers Have High Rates of Psychological Distress (By Laura Walter, Occupational Hazards, July 22, 2008).

Nearly five percent of employees suffer from psychological distress levels associated with a high likelihood of a mental disorder, reports a study in the July *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

Led by Michael F. Hilton, Ph.D., of The University of Queensland, Australia, the study was based on a survey of more than 60,500 full-time employees of 58 Australian companies. Workers anonymously completed the "Kessler 6" questionnaire, which asked how often they

felt sad, nervous, hopeless, etc. Scores of 13 or higher (on a 24-point scale) indicated high psychological distress, with a high likelihood of a mental disorder.

Overall, 4.5 percent of the employees had high psychological distress. Another 9.6 percent had moderate psychological distress (score of 8 to 12), indicating a "possible" mental disorder.

Just 22 percent of workers with high psychological distress were currently receiving treatment for a mental health condition. Another 29 percent said they had a mental disorder but had never sought treatment, while 31 percent denied having any problem.

Risk Factors

Workers in sales positions were at greatest risk of high psychological distress: 5.6 percent of men and 7.5 percent of women. Workers expected to work long hours (60 or more per week) also had high rates of psychological distress. Another risk factor was working in "non-traditional gender roles" – for example, women who worked as equipment operators or laborers and for men who worked in clerical or administrative jobs. Marital separation and low education were also linked to high psychological distress.

Corporate occupational health and safety programs increasingly are taking an active approach to prevention, screening and early treatment for workers' physical health problems. Companies have been less proactive, however, in identifying and providing treatment for workers with mental health problems. Despite extensive evidence showing the high rates and costs of mental health disorders in the workplace, many employers have the perception that their employees are somehow immune to such problems.

The new study demonstrates a high rate of psychological distress in the working population. The risk factors identified may help in targeting groups of workers at high risk of psychological distress and mental health problems.

"Employers need to focus health resources on a common, debilitating, largely untreated illness group that substantially reduces employee productivity at work, increases absences from work, and increases employee attrition," Hilton and colleagues write.

New Law Denies Worker's Compensation for Employees Who Behave Badly (by Marcos Ortiz, ABC 4 News – Salt Lake City, 7/18/08)

Good behavior will now be a must to get worker's compensation benefits. If not, workers will be denied benefits. That's a result of a new law that went into effect July 1st. But the new law is coming under fire as the state's Labor Commission attempts to develop new rules for public to follow.

It used to be that if a worker was injured, citizenship had no bearing on workers compensation benefits. But the new law lets insurance companies deny benefits to workers who commit crimes. Attorneys who represent workers claim its targeting illegal workers.

"Insurance company can now question someone's legal status to work in this country, which is unprecedented," said attorney Mike Martinez who represents workers. He also said prevents employers from being fined for hiring illegal workers. "If they are cut off for benefits for not being able to work legally, then the employer should be sanctioned also that's what fair," said Martinez.

Critics of the new law believe employers will purposely tell insurance companies that injured workers are illegal thereby cutting off benefits. They say it's an incentive for employees because their rates wouldn't go up.

"I don't believe that to be true because I think most of the employers in this state to be responsible and they are required by law to hire people with appropriate documentation," said Theodore Kanell who represents employers during workers compensation hearings.

Under this law, workers whose benefits are in jeopardy won't know what constitutes criminal behavior until they get a hearing. "Criminal conduct isn't defined in the statute," said Richard Lajeunesse a law judge for the Labor Commission. "That's going to be done on a case by case basis."

Nanotechnology Safety Guidance Offered in Spanish

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) announced that "Safe Nanotechnology in the Workplace" is available in Spanish. The publication addresses the following areas:

- Are nanoparticles hazardous to workers?
- How can workers be exposed?
- Can nanoparticles be measured?
- Can worker exposures be controlled?

Nanotechnology is the engineering and manipulation of materials at the molecular level. This new technology creates materials with dimensions ranging from 1 to 100 nanometers (1 nanometer is 1 billionth of a meter). Particles created at the nanoscale have different chemical and physical properties than larger particles of the same material. These manufactured nanoparticles are known as engineered nanoparticles. Scientists and manufacturers can use nanoparticles to create new products that would be impossible with larger particles.

Eleven (11) Tips for Safe On-the-Job Driving

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of workplace fatalities. In addition, car accidents are a costly factor for employers. OSHA data confirms that when healthcare bills, workers' compensation payments and property damage costs are combined, motor vehicle crashes become the most costly workplace accident, according to a recent report in the White Mountain Independent, a local Arizona newspaper.

In addition to driver training, OSHA recommends that corporate driving policies include the following elements:

1. Enforce mandatory use of seat belts.
2. Ensure that employees who drive on the job have valid licenses.
3. Set policies to comply with states' drivers' licensing and child labor laws.
4. Incorporate fatigue management into safety programs.
5. Schedule job-related driving during regular hours.
6. Assign driving-related tasks to responsible drivers.
7. Provide fleet vehicles that offer the highest possible levels of occupant protection.
8. Train employees properly who need to operate specialized vehicles.
9. Offer periodic vision screening and general physicals for employees whose primary job requirement is to drive.
10. Avoid cell phone use.
11. Avoid other activities such as eating, drinking, smoking or adjusting accessory vehicle controls while driving.

Workers with Sleep Disorders Have More Accidents

New data from a study by sleep experts suggests that people with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) have increased rates of workplace injuries, specifically motor vehicle crashes and falls. Researchers from the University of British Columbia Hospital and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute studied 706 patients and found that those with OSA suffered 75 percent more injuries at work and were five times more likely to have a fall or car crash, compared to people without OSA.

OSA, obstructive sleep apnea, sufferers stop breathing during sleep due to a collapsed airway that prevents air from getting to the lungs. These “apneic events” last anywhere from 10 seconds to a minute and may occur hundreds of times a night. These disruptions cause a number of side effects that interfere with daily life including chronic fatigue and memory impairment, as well as long-lasting complications, such as hypertension and increased risk of

stroke/heart attack. Up to 90 percent of the 18 million sleep apnea sufferers are unaware they have a sleep disorder.

One of the best ways that employers can lessen the likelihood of injuries by workers with OSA is to educate employees on the warning signs and symptoms (loud snoring, gasping for breath in sleep, excessive daytime fatigue, etc) and encourage employees with symptoms to seek a sleep test.

Six (6) Fatal Phrases That Lead to Unsafe Workplaces

Attitude makes a big difference in workplace safety. *Rocky Mountain Construction*, Reed Business Information, recently reported on the following six phrases that reflect unsafe attitudes that can lead to jobsite accidents. "Whenever you hear one of these phrases or something similar on the job, you should pay close attention to the situation at hand," Benjamin Mangan, president and founder of MANCOMM and American Safety Training Inc, recently told *Rocky Mountain Construction*. "You may be able to stop an accident before it has happened."

- **"We don't have time."** (Investing time in safety training ultimately saves the costs of injuries and the lives of employees).
- **"I know a shortcut."** ("Shortcuts can often lead to disaster," Mangan said. "For example, a worker may decide to use too short a ladder to reach the roof of a building because he doesn't want to find and transport a longer one. A ladder should extend three feet beyond the top of a building, so the worker can step off the ladder onto the roof. If the worker uses one that's too short and has to climb up onto the roof, he could experience a nasty fall. On the 2005 list of OSHA's 10 most commonly violated regulations, 'Ladders' was entry No. 10, so one's choice in ladders can be a crucial decision.").
- **"I think this is the right way to do it."** ("In our safety training classes," Mangan said, "we encourage safety professionals from a wide variety of industries to look up regulations whenever they are in doubt about a safety matter. Guessing or believing hearsay is always unwise.").
- **"Regulations don't change that often."** ("Today's world is constantly changing, and each day brings new advances in technology. These changes are reflected in the regulations," Mangan explained. Regulations should be considered as works constantly in progress, and it is up to employers to stay updated on the rules that affect their companies, he added.).
- **"We'll fix it later."** (Employees should never be allowed to work with broken equipment.).
- **"It's not in the budget."** (Safety may seem like an expense, but consider the far greater costs of healthcare costs for the injured employee, workers' compensation payments and federal and state OSHA penalties.).

"Some regulations may seem inconvenient or difficult to follow," Mangan said, "but many were created because at some point, a worker experienced an injury that could have been prevented. As a result, a solution to the problem was born. When you observe the regulations, you can avoid major problems and expenses and enjoy a safer workplace."

Workplace Can Be Harbor For Germs: Study Found Keyboards, Desks With High Bacteria (By Andrew Eder, Gannett News Service - May 31, 2008)

If you're the type who already dreads trudging to your cubicle on Monday mornings, here's another reason to stay home: Your desk may be a veritable zoo for bacteria.

In a recent study, a British consumer advocacy group tested a few dozen of its office keyboards for harmful bacteria. Four were deemed health hazards, and one was five times dirtier than a toilet seat in the same office.

And that's just the keyboard — there's also the computer mouse, the telephone, the coffee mug, the work refrigerator and all the other surfaces on which workers lay their hands, breathe, cough and spill crumbs of food.

"I think the office environment has always been a particularly unhygienic environment," said Josette Covington, clinical director of occupational health services at Wilmington, Del.-based Christiana Care Health System. In the keyboard study, the British magazine *Which?* (similar to *Consumer Reports*) commissioned microbiologist James Francis to test more than 30 office keyboards for a handful of nasty bugs that indicate poor hygiene.

Two keyboards had *staphylococcus aureus* — associated with skin infections and food poisoning — at "warning levels," and one keyboard was removed from the office because its bacteria levels were 150 times higher than normal.

"That keyboard is increasing the risk of its user becoming ill," Francis told the magazine. "I haven't seen a reading like that in a very long time. It was off the scale."

It's not terribly surprising that keyboards and other office equipment are crawling with bacteria — after all, these one-celled microorganisms are already crawling inside our bodies and on our skin at massive levels. One study last year found evidence of 182 species of bacteria on skin samples.

In addition to bacteria, workers also have to worry about viruses, the smaller infectious agents that cause, among other things, the common cold.

Sick workers should stay home, but even that may not be enough to prevent the spread of illness. "People can be contagious before they have the symptoms," said Donald Lehman, a professor of medical technology at the University of Delaware.

Lessons Learned: Repeat Fall Protection Violations Plague Construction Firm

OSHA issued citations with proposed penalties totaling \$157,600 to Shelby Stephens Construction Inc., a Fort Worth, Texas-based contractor, for allegedly failing to protect employees from falls and falling objects at two of its worksites in Garland.

OSHA cited the wood-framing company, which has 19 employees, for eight alleged serious and 15 alleged repeat violations following two OSHA inspections which began on Jan. 7 at the company's worksite in Garland, Texas. The investigations revealed that employees were not being adequately protected from falls and falling objects, and other workplace hazards.

"This is not the first time this employer has exposed its employees to unsafe working conditions," said Stephen Boyd, OSHA's area director in Dallas. "Protecting employees from potential fall hazards is critical, and employers must follow OSHA's standards to provide a healthful working environment. It is fortunate in this case that no injuries occurred."

The serious violations at one site were for failing to extend the end of platforms at least 6 inches over the centerline of its support, failing to ensure that 10-foot platforms extended more than 12 inches over their support and failing to provide a ladder at all points of access. Serious violations at the second worksite include failure to install adequate bracing on scaffolding and to ensure scaffold poles were set on a firm foundation.

Repeat violations include Shelby Stephens Construction's failure to provide employees with fall protection equipment, such as helmets; failure to provide employees with personal protective equipment when working with power tools, such as goggles to protect the eyes; and failure to ensure platforms and walkways are at least 18 inches in width.

Shelby Stephens Construction has 15 working days from receipt of the citations to comply, request an informal conference with the OSHA area director in Dallas, or contest the citations and penalties before the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

Lessons Learned: Bristol-Myers Spends \$3.65 Million for Clean Air Upgrades

Bristol-Myers Squibb agreed to reduce the output of ozone-depleting refrigerants at multiple industrial facilities around the country at a combined cost of \$3.65 million in order to resolve violations of the Clean Air Act, the Justice Department and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today. The international pharmaceutical manufacturer is based in New York.

Under an agreement filed in federal court in Evansville, Ind., the company will be required to retire or retrofit seventeen industrial refrigeration units by July 2009 at facilities in Mt. Vernon and Evansville, Ind.; Hopewell, N.J.; and Humacao and Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. The units are used in the facilities' industrial process or as air conditioners and currently use hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) as refrigerants. When leaked into the air, HCFCs deplete ozone in the earth's stratosphere, which protects it from dangerous amounts of cancer-causing

ultraviolet (UV) rays. Excessive UV exposure is linked to increased incidents of cataracts and poses risks to human immune systems and plant and animal life. The company has agreed to change over the seventeen units to use only non ozone-depleting refrigerants.

In addition, the company has agreed to perform a supplemental environment project that will involve retiring two comfort cooling units at its New Brunswick, N.J. plant and connecting the air conditioners to the company's new centralized refrigeration system. The new system uses water-chilled coolers which act as the refrigerant to minimize the use of chemical agents in the chilling process.

Combined, the measures that the company is performing will remove more than 6,350 pounds of harmful HCFCs from their operations. Furthermore, the company will take additional steps to assure compliance with the EPA regulations at thirteen of its facilities and pay \$127,000 in civil penalties.

Following an EPA information request to ensure compliance with ozone-depletion regulations for the Evansville facility, Bristol Myers-Squibb voluntarily conducted an audit of twenty-five of its other facilities and reported all potential violations that were discovered. The audit uncovered potential violations at the thirteen facilities located in six states and Puerto Rico.

“Bristol-Myers Squibb has acted responsibly, not only to discover, document, and correct past violations, but to eliminate the use of potentially damaging refrigerants in its operations,” said Granta Nakayama, Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. “These actions will help to protect the ozone layer, ensuring a safer environment for our future generations.”

The proposed consent decree, lodged in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, is subject to a 30-day public comment period and approval by the federal court. Bristol-Myers Squibb is required to pay the penalty within 30 days of the court's approval of the settlement.

Lessons Learned: CSB Releases New Safety Video on Fatal 2006 Oilfield Explosion in Mississippi, Emphasizes Safe Practices for Hot Work

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) released a new safety video detailing an explosion that led to the deaths of three contractors at the Partridge-Raleigh oilfield in rural Raleigh, Mississippi, in June 2006. All the victims were employees of Stringer's Oilfield Services, an independent contract firm hired by Partridge-Raleigh to perform maintenance on oil storage tanks at the facility.

Entitled 'Death in the Oilfield,' the nine-minute video is based on the CSB's final investigation report, which was voted on and approved by the Board in June 2007. The video is available for viewing and downloading in the Video Room of the CSB's website, Safetyvideos.gov as well as on the CSB channel on [YouTube \(www.youtube.com/USCSB\)](http://www.youtube.com/USCSB). DVDs of the video will be provided at no charge through the online request form at CSB.gov.

The new video includes a 3-D computer animation depicting the sequence of events that led to the explosion, which occurred when sparks from a welding operation ignited flammable vapors venting from a storage tank. The animation describes the preparation of the site by Stringer's employees and the unsafe hot work that led to the accident.

The video, which includes interviews with CSB investigators and Board Member William E. Wright, highlights the key safety lessons and board recommendations from the CSB's year-long investigation of the accident. The investigation determined that neither Partridge-Raleigh nor Stringer's Oilfield Services followed safe practices for hot work, which includes operations such as cutting, welding, and grinding that can generate sparks and ignite flammable materials. The CSB's final report called for increased inspection and enforcement of OSHA safety standards at oil production facilities.

'This is the fourth fatal oilfield accident the CSB has investigated since 1998, which underscores the need for improved safety practices in this industry,' Mr. Wright said. 'It is our hope this video will be widely viewed in the U.S. oil production sector so that readily preventable accidents like the one in Mississippi are less likely in the future.'

CSB safety videos have been viewed over one million times over the Internet since the launch of the program in December 2005. More than 75,000 DVDs have been distributed to industry and labor groups, government agencies, safety trainers, educators, emergency responders, and individual requesters throughout the world.

The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents. The agency's board members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. CSB investigations look into all aspects of chemical accidents, including physical causes such as equipment failure as well as inadequacies in regulations, industry standards, and safety management systems. The Board does not issue citations or fines but does make safety recommendations to plants, industry organizations, labor groups, and regulatory agencies such as OSHA and EPA. Visit our website, www.csb.gov. For more information, contact Daniel Horowitz at (202) 261-7613 / (202) 441-6074 cell.

Lessons Learned: OSHA Seeks Fines For Two Findlay Firms

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration has recommended that two Findlay firms each be fined more than \$20,000 for safety violations found at their industrial sites during inspections.

Filtech Inc. was fined \$27,900 after agency inspectors found seven serious violations during a May 6 inspection at its plant, which makes auto parts including air cleaners and oil filters.

Violations included missing safety lockout devices on machinery, inadequate safety training for workers, improper work practices to prevent electric shock or injury, lack of protective equipment, and an employee not wearing provided protective eye and face shields.

Molten Corp., a maker of rubber auto hoses and belts, was fined \$20,625 for six serious violations found during a Jan. 31 inspection. Violations included unclean and unorderly work

areas, unsafe transfer and storage of flammable liquids, unsafe procedures for changing molds on plastic injection molding machines, lack of periodic safety inspections by the company, and use of compressed air at dangerous pressure levels.

Safety Training Strategies – “Catch Them Doing Something Right” (by Polly White from Northern Counties Health Care Inc.) [from "Safety Stuff" by Richard Hawk Inc.]

Here is an idea for celebrating good workplace safety practices: It seems most work places are punitive and emphasize what you do wrong. Sometimes it seems like we work in the world of shame and blame. We are always ready and find it easy to criticize others for not doing things correctly. I believe we need a change of heart and mind. So . . . I've made my motto for safety "Catch them doing something right."

Here is an idea that "focuses" on good behavior. When you do a workplace safety walk through, keep your digital camera ready and be ready to catch employees in the act of "doing something right." When you catch someone using their best safety practice, like using a safety device, lifting a load correctly, or perhaps just setting out the signs to mark a wet floor, snap their picture. The pictures can then be placed on a public bulletin board.

You can be very creative with the bulletin board titles and picture captions. I like "We Celebrate Safety" at the top and then under the pictures you can put "Jane Smith has been caught doing something safely" and then post the pictures for everyone to see.

Leave them up until the next safety walk through. The pictures celebrate the person for doing good work and serve as a reminder of correct behavior.

Safety Training Strategies – “Mr. Potato Head Parts” (by Linda Sams from Litehouse Dressings) [from "Safety Stuff" by Richard Hawk Inc.]

I am the Safety Manager for a food manufacturing facility. Here is the most recent way our company makes training fun!

Every year we have all of our employees go to a "Safety Blitz." In a three hour time frame we cover many topics. We want to make sure that we get our message across and make them think about what they were taught long after the training is over.

One of the things we do is pass out all of the parts to a Mr. Potato Head to some of the employees as they arrive and check in. When we start the segment about accidents, we bring up a slide that states, "What's it worth to you?"

We then ask the individuals with the arms to raise their hands. We explain that they were just in an accident and lost their arm and would like to know what amount of money they would want to be compensated for that loss. The answers we get vary from \$10,000 to priceless (can't put a dollar amount to it). We keep doing that with each piece until we have the entire Mr. Potato head back together.

We then put up a slide that shows approximately what Workers Compensation would pay for the impairment (loss).

The room gets very loud with the employees seemingly unhappy with what they consider to be not enough for the loss. We then ask them, "If you feel the compensation is not enough, why do you take chances that put you at risk to lose your life or limb?" The room becomes very quiet.

Our employees were still talking about it the next day in the lunch room.

Safety Tidbits (from "Safety Stuff" by Richard Hawk Inc.
<http://www.richardhawking.com>)

- The risk that someone will be shot in an armed robbery: 1 in 20.
- Men with mustaches may be allergic to their own lip hair. That's because mustaches can harbor airborne pollens that trigger allergies.
- Worldwide, 1 million people a year get tetanus and 270,000 die as a result.
- A rat can fall five stories without getting hurt.
- Open fields or ridges above the timberline are risky places to be during a thunderstorm.
- Burning tires create thick black smoke, useful for signaling.
- Tropical centipedes grow up to 11 inches long and can kill birds with their bite.
- As many as 500 people die each year getting in and out of the tub.
- Parking garages rank third among top locations for violent crime (after homes and public streets).
- If you cannot get indoors, your best chance to escape a swarm of bees is to run through bushes or high grass, which may disrupt their flight. Jumping into a body of water will not do any good; the bees will be waiting for you when you surface. All bees will defend their hives with gusto, but while regular honeybees may follow you for 50 yards, killer bees may chase you three times this distance or more.