



TRAINING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- In 2002, more than 4.7 million workers sustained work-related injuries and illnesses in the private sector alone, and an average of 15 workers died from work-related injuries each day.
- Efforts to prevent occupational illness and injury are hampered by the lack of trained safety and health professionals to meet the needs of a rapidly changing work environment and an increasingly diverse workforce.

WHAT HAS NIOSH ACCOMPLISHED?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducts a competitive training grant program aimed at increasing the number of professionals trained to work in the occupational safety and health field. NIOSH supports a network of 16 Education and Research Centers (ERCs) and 42 separate Training Project Grants (TPGs) around the country. These training programs produce about 600 professionals each year with specialized training in disciplines that include occupational medicine, occupational health nursing, industrial hygiene, occupational safety, and injury prevention. Because ERCs are regional, they can respond to various trends in the workplace throughout the country. ERCs and TPGs produce professionals who can protect workers in virtually every industrial sector.

Example of program in action:

NIOSH estimates that about half of all U.S. occupational safety and health professionals graduate from NIOSH-supported programs at the Masters and Doctoral levels. About 80% of the professionals graduating from NIOSH-funded programs pursue careers in occupational safety and health.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- The challenge for the future is to train occupational safety and health professionals to protect a diverse workforce in the face of rapid advances in science, medicine, and technology while still addressing age-old concerns (e.g., farming injuries and lead poisoning).
- NIOSH will continue its work to strengthen occupational safety and health training and to broaden training support to include people beyond the traditional disciplines.
- NIOSH also will continue its efforts to find new and effective methods of delivering training materials to professionals once they have left the academic environment.

Additional information is available at www.cdc.gov/niosh/oep/. For more information on other NIOSH programs, visit www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/pib/.

March 2004

