A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC
Safe at Work
Worker's Memorial Day — April 28, 2009
Recorded: April 21, 2008; posted: April 23, 2009

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Americans are among the most industrious, hard-working people in the world, but that strong work ethic comes at a cost. Every year, thousands of U.S. workers are killed or injured in the workplace.

John Sestito is a researcher with CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. He's joining us by phone today to discuss the importance of safety in the workplace. Welcome to the show, John.

[John Sestito] Thank you, Bob. Glad to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] John, how many people die each year from work-related injuries or diseases?

[John Sestito] In 2007, we know that 5,488 workers died from work-related fatalities. In addition, based on best-available information, we believe an estimated 49,000 Americans died from work-related diseases, most of which were chronic disease.

[Dr. Gaynes] So how many workers incur non-fatal work-related injuries or diseases?

[John Sestito] Four million workers, approximately 4 percent of the working population, reported work-related injuries and illnesses in 2007. Of those, approximately 95 percent, or about 3.8 million, were injuries; the remainder were occupational illnesses.

[Dr. Gaynes] So what kinds of jobs are actually the most dangerous?

[John Sestito] When we think of jobs, we think of both workplaces and occupations. So I'll give you both pieces of information. Traditionally, the most dangerous jobs have been identified with agriculture, mining, transportation, and construction. So when we actually look at specific jobs or occupations, the groups that tend to stick out are fisherman, loggers, aircraft pilots, iron and steel workers… that will give you a sense of high-risk industries and jobs.

[Dr. Gaynes] What kinds of injuries or diseases are the most common?

[John Sestito] We tend to focus primarily on the more severe cases of injuries and illnesses. We call those the "days away from work" cases. Among that particular class of condition which we

track, musculoskeletal disorders, specifically over exertion and repetitive motion injuries, tend to stand out.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can workers and their employers do to insure a safer workplace?

[John Sestito] Both workers and employers need to be informed. Employers can take steps to work with their Chambers of Commerce, their insurers, and their state and federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration officials. Workers certainly need to follow their employer safety and health rules, they need to be better informed with respect to work practices, and they need to know when and where to report hazardous conditions, both to their employer and the the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

[Dr. Gaynes] John, where can listeners get more information about workplace safety?

[John Sestito] Workers, check out CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/niosh. Employers, check out the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's website at www.osha.gov.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks John. I've been talking today with CDC's John Sestito about the importance of safety in the workplace.

Remember, while employers are responsible for ensuring workplace safety, workers play a vital role in identifying and correcting problems and assisting their employer with workplace safety whenever possible.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.