



HEALTH AND SAFETY OF YOUNG & AGING WORKERS

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Because of their biologic, social, and economic characteristics, both young and aging workers have unique and substantial risks for work-related injuries and illnesses.
- Each year, nearly 70 workers aged <18 years die as a result of work-related injuries, and an estimated 84,000 are treated in hospital emergency rooms.
- By 2010, an estimated 40% of the U.S. workforce will be 45 years and older. Older workers are at increased risk for fatal work injuries, require more time to return to work following an injury or illness, and are less likely to receive training as their jobs change.

WHAT HAS NIOSH ACCOMPLISHED?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has broadened knowledge, initiated promising research and intervention efforts, and developed productive partnerships to address the health and safety needs of both young and aging workers.

Examples of program in action:

- Through the childhood agricultural injury prevention initiative established in 1997, NIOSH collected and disseminated previously unavailable data on childhood agricultural injuries. NIOSH has funded 24 research projects to advance knowledge about the causes and prevention of childhood agricultural injuries. NIOSH also funds the National Children's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health to translate scientific findings into layman's terms and facilitate prevention efforts across the country.
- NIOSH has funded young worker safety and health demonstration projects and published a guide for communities on local efforts to better protect working youth. A guide on how to organize state-based teams is being prepared for distribution nationally.
- NIOSH is part of an inter-agency workgroup representing 26 federal organizations that was established in 2003 to optimize the impact of federal resources in addressing young worker injuries and illnesses. As an example of this work, safety and health curricula developed through NIOSH demonstration projects are now being used by the federal Job Corps program and some U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration training centers.
- NIOSH collaborated with the National Institute on Aging to solicit and fund occupational safety and health research on aging workers. NIOSH also is supporting a study by the Institute of Medicine to identify research gaps in our understanding of health and safety issues affecting older workers.
- NIOSH is analyzing data and developing a chartbook documenting the safety and health needs of older workers. In addition, NIOSH is partnering with "Experience Works," an organization dedicated to serving the needs of aging workers.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Substantial advances have been made in knowledge about work-related injuries among young and aging workers. Increased efforts are needed to communicate this information to the diverse stakeholders who can improve the health and safety of these workers. Additional research also is needed to better understand unique risks for these workers and to identify effective prevention measures.

Additional information is available at www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/youth/ and www2a.cdc.gov/NORA/noratopictemp.asp?rscharea=spr. For more information on other NIOSH programs, visit www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/pib/. March 2004

