



# NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL RESEARCH AGENDA

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- In 2002, more than 5,500 workers were fatally injured at work, an average of 15 each day. In addition, over 4.7 million workers sustained nonfatal injuries and illnesses in the private sector alone.
- The direct costs of occupational injuries and illnesses were estimated to be \$45.8 billion in 2001 (2003 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index). The indirect costs were estimated to be an additional \$137.4 to \$229 billion.

## WHAT HAS NIOSH ACCOMPLISHED?

In 1996, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and its outside partners established the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA), a framework to guide occupational safety and health research through the next decade. The NORA process resulted in a remarkable consensus on the top 21 occupational safety and health research priorities. NORA is an agenda not only for NIOSH, but for the Nation as a whole. Through the impetus of NORA, NIOSH has energized occupational safety and health research, leveraged resources of other federal agencies to support NORA, pursued an active program of intramural and extramural research, and developed new research partnerships with stakeholders. NORA continues to be an innovative, multi-disciplinary national research agenda built on strong partnerships with public, private, and non-profit organizations and continues to be modeled at the local, state, national, and international levels.

### *Examples of program in action:*

- As a result of NORA, NIOSH has increased its overall investment in extramural research and has leveraged funding from other federal agencies for occupational safety and health research. An example of an effective partnership is the collaboration formed among a nursing home company, lift device manufacturers, universities, employers, and NIOSH to develop and evaluate an injury prevention program that reduced the incidence, severity, and cost of low-back and other musculoskeletal injuries to workers in nursing homes. Nursing homes have the highest overall injury rate of all health services industries, while “nursing aides, orderlies and attendants” is the highest risk occupation for low-back pain among female workers, with almost 270,000 reported cases yearly. The partners received the NORA 2003 Partnering Award for Worker Safety and Health.
- The fourth bi-annual NORA Symposium, “Working Partnerships--Research to Practice,” was held in June 2003 in Arlington, VA. The conference brought together nearly 250 researchers and stakeholders from the private and public sectors to discuss new findings and partnering opportunities related to NORA target areas. Scientific presentations addressing NORA priorities were an important aspect of this conference, providing a unique forum for a broad cross-section of the occupational safety and health community to learn about the research conducted during seven years of NORA.
- The *2003 NORA Update*, the latest in a series of bulletins under this title, provides the latest on NORA-related research efforts including a timeline of NORA events, newly published documents related to the NORA priority areas, upcoming NORA workshops, and special NORA research initiatives.
- The *NORA Compendium of Research* was released at the NORA 2003 Symposium and contains summaries of current research projects supported through NORA. Four-hundred-forty-eight projects are classified by NORA priority area.

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The development of NORA was only the first step in an ongoing effort between NIOSH and its many partners to guide occupational safety and health research into the future. As the impact of NORA continues to grow, the Nation is better positioned to address the toll of workplace injury and death. Through NORA, NIOSH will build on existing successes by broadening partnerships in occupational safety and health research; expanding efforts to collaborate with other federal agencies; and targeting new research initiatives to ensure that NORA continues to make a difference in protecting worker safety and health.

Additional information is available at [www2a.cdc.gov/NORA/](http://www2a.cdc.gov/NORA/). For more information on other NIOSH programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/pib/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/pib/).

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