

Occupational Health

(revised May 16, 2018)

Work-related injuries and illnesses are preventable, and control of occupational hazards is the most effective means of prevention. The New Hampshire Public Health Association (NHPHA) recognizes that all New Hampshire workers have the right to safe and healthful working conditions. NH has a rate of 36 per 100,000 workers suffering hospitalizations for work related injuries, and close to 20 work related fatalities each year.¹ It is vital that local and state health professionals support programs focused on prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses that ensure that all workers earn a living wage and return home alive and well.

Continued progress in occupational health requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that protects and promotes worker health through effective surveillance, prevention and targeted intervention efforts.

Therefore, the NHPHA supports policies that:

- Promote and maintain the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers both in and outside of the workplace.
- Prevent injury and illness caused by working conditions;
- Ensure timely access to diagnosis and treatment of injury and illness caused by working conditions;
- Practice primary prevention in eliminating or reducing occupational exposures to hazardous substances (i.e. substitution and engineering controls);
- Do not shift risk from the ambient environment to the work environment when practicing pollution prevention or toxics use reduction;
- Include workers in organizational decision making around sustainability and environmental protection initiatives;
- Promote right-to-know programs and hazard reduction activities as an essential means of protecting workers from harm due to exposure to hazardous substances;
- Adopt a Total Worker Health approach to worker well-being, acknowledging risk factors related to work that contribute to health problems previously considered unrelated to work;²
- Ensure accurate monitoring and assessment of the burden and magnitude of work-related injuries and illnesses through data surveillance and reporting of occupational exposure, disease, and injury;
- Promote freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining for safety and health protections;
- Promote social equity (respect, well-being, quality of life) and support of a living wage (ensure the amount of adult wage earners take home is sufficient to meet basic needs).

(continued)

References

¹Bureau of Labor Statistics, Fatal occupational injuries, counts and rates by state of incident 2015-16 at: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.t05.htm>

²Centers for Disease Control/The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health at: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/default.html>

Resources

NH Occupational Health Surveillance Program, University of New Hampshire
<https://iod.unh.edu/projects/occupational-health-surveillance-program>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at <https://www.osha.gov/> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) at <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/data/default.html>

Healthy People 2020. Occupational Health and Safety
<http://healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=30>

Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) at: <http://www.cste.org/?page=EHOHI>

APHA Policy Statements: <http://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements> (search for occupational health)

NIOSH Total Worker Health at: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/>

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Occupational Health.
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/population/occupational/>