



Hudson River Valley Chapter Newsletter

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Useful & Helpful Links

<http://www.assp.org>

Link to the National ASSP webpage for information on great topics in EH&S. Go look things up.

<http://hudsonrivervalley.assp.org>

Link to the Hudson River Valley Chapter web page. Information on the Local items and events as well as good information. Try it, you'll like it!

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

Link to the Center for Disease Control. Great current information on health items to help protect us all through illness controlling and prevention. Lots of good items!

Hotlinks in articles are in **Bold Red font.**

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ASSP NEW Military Practice Specialty.

As of September 1, 2019 the former Military Branch of the Public Sector Practice Specialty recently became the first new specialty in ASSP since 2013. The ASSP Board approved its formation as the 19th practice specialty. It has over 1,200 members, and looks forward to growing in the future.

The practice specialty offers networking opportunities via social media groups, conference calls and in-person meetings such as the Annual Professional Development Conference so members can connect with top industry professionals just like all the other practice specialties in ASSP. It also provides safety-related, military-focused content and information that you can immediately implement and share with employers and colleagues to create safe, productive work environments.

This practice specialty also provides professional development opportunities including military and Occupational Safety and Health focused education, mentor relationships that facilitate the sharing of knowledge, as well as volunteer and leadership opportunities to build your skills and experience to enhance your resume for greater positions.

September 10 is Suicide Prevention Day.

Most of us go to work each day without thinking that a co-worker will not be coming in because they took their own life. This tragedy is becoming more and more common. The U.S. suicide rate is at its highest point in 50 years. The construction industries have a rate of 53 out of every 100,000 workers. To truly have a healthy and safe workplace, change must begin with upper management that will foster an environment where workers feel comfortable discussing mental health issues and a mental health program should be delivered to all employees as well as contract workers on your construction site. Demonstrate its importance by putting in place a commitment policy or a statement of support that is signed by a Corporate Manager of the company. This policy should/must be reviewed periodically with all employees. It should have a place for them to sign that it was reviewed with them, and it should include well defined action items if someone seeks or needs assistance with an issue they are experiencing.

Four Steps to Improve Workplace Ergonomics.

It's no secret that ergonomics programs often struggle to make an impact. They start with a flurry of training and assessments, and then all too often fizzle out when people realize that there's more talking about ergonomics than implementing ergonomics improvements. The ergonomics program starts to feel more like a cost center to the company rather than a benefit to management, and they begin to reduce the resources committed to supporting ergonomics activities.

Successful ergonomics initiatives are designed from the beginning to deliver results that are workplace improvements that reduce ergonomics risk while making jobs easier and less painful for workers. These ergonomics improvement programs treat training and assessments as enabling activities, not deliverables. While they do set goals and monitor progress for enabling activities, the real measure of success is ergonomics risk reduction achieved through workplace improvements.

Ergonomics, unlike traditional safety concerns such as machine guarding or confined spaces, is not subject to specific workplace standards in most countries. Consequently, getting funding for ergonomic improvements is often a barrier to implementation; therefore, cost justification is an important fourth step for a successful ergonomics initiative. These four steps are as follows;

1 - Identifying Potential Ergonomics Issues

The first step of ergonomics risk management is to identify potential issues. These are tasks in which workers experience a combination of forceful exertions, awkward working postures, and repetitive movements. Other issues that can arise include contact stress, vibration exposure, and temperature extremes. Potential ergonomics issues can be identified by anyone in the workplace, from workers doing the tasks, to supervisors familiar with the jobs in their area, to health and safety professionals conducting inspections.

2 – Assessing Ergonomics Risks

The second step of ergonomics risk management is to assess potential ergonomics issues and determine if the tasks present a high risk of musculoskeletal disorders. This step helps identify root causes of the ergonomics risk, important in step 3 below. There are a variety of ergonomics assessments available, ranging from screening surveys that provide a risk score for a job to deep analysis tools that quantify ergonomics risk of a specific type of task. Ergonomics screening surveys score the presence of ergonomic risk factors at different threshold levels. These are typically used to prioritize where improvement efforts should go based on the score and the number of people impacted by the job. An ergonomics risk road map can be developed that clearly shows the jobs that present the highest ergonomic risk exposures. Deep-dive ergonomics assessments are specific type of activity. Deep-dive assessments are well suited for either manual material handling tasks or intensive hand and arm work tasks.

3 – Controlling Ergonomics Risks

Reducing ergonomics risk through workplace improvements is the third step in ergonomics risk management. However, successful ergonomics improvement programs typically a fast-track process for implementing improvements. Oftentimes, a simple, low cost solution to a potential issue is fairly obvious, and it makes sense to implement the solution, without formally assessing the ergonomics risk.

4 – Justifying the Cost of Ergonomic Improvements

Ergonomics improvements that require expenses over a certain threshold (which is unique to each company) are often required to satisfy cost justification analyses. The challenge is that, oftentimes, costs related to injuries, turnover, and worker morale are not fully accounted for in the benefits analysis, so ergonomics improvement projects are often not funded due to lack of cost justification. Some companies address this by requiring a lower return-on-investment threshold for ergonomics improvements, but in other companies, ergonomics is held to the same threshold as other projects.

The good news is that while ergonomics improvements are usually initiated to reduce injuries and worker discomfort, they often improve productivity and quality as well. If an ergonomics improvement reduces reaching or walking distances, eliminates manual tasks, or allows a two-worker job to be performed by one worker, productivity improvements can be quantified and may be sufficient to justify the investment.

New Workplace Safety & Health Inspection Weighting System.

On October 1, 2019 the new U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration's OSHA Weighting System (OWS) will become effective. The new OWS will encourage the appropriate allocation of resources to support OSHA's balanced approach of promoting safe and healthy workplaces, and continue to develop and support a management system that focuses enforcement activities on critical and strategic areas where the agency's efforts can have the most impact.

Under the current enforcement weighting system, OSHA weights certain inspections based on time taken to complete the inspection or, in some cases, the impact of the inspection on workplace safety and health. OWS recognizes that time is not the only factor to assess when considering the potential impact of an inspection. Other factors such as types of hazards inspected and abated and effective targeting – also influence the impact on workplace safety and health. The new system adds enforcement initiatives such as the Site-Specific Targeting to the weighting system.

The new OWS replaces the current enforcement weighting system initiated in Fiscal Year 2015. The new system is based on an evaluation of the existing criteria and a working group's recommendations regarding improvements to the weighting system. OSHA has been running the new weighting system currently to confirm the integrity of the data collected.

The system will continue to weight inspections, but will do so based on other factors, including agency priorities and the impact of inspections, rather than simply on a time-weighted basis. The new OWS approach reinforces OSHA's balanced approach to occupational safety and health (i.e., strong and fair enforcement, compliance assistance and recognition) and will incorporate the three major work elements performed by the field: enforcement activity, essential enforcement support functions (e.g., severe injury reporting and complaint resolution), and compliance assistance efforts.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to help ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

CSB Calls on EPA to Update Study on Hydrofluoric Acid.

The Chemical Safety Board is calling on the EPA to review and update its existing hydrofluoric acid study to determine the effectiveness of existing regulations as well as the viability of utilizing safer alkylation technologies in petroleum refineries. Hydrofluoric acid is commonly used to make refrigerants, herbicides, pharmaceuticals, high-octane gasoline, aluminum, plastics, electrical components and fluorescent light bulbs. It is also used to etch glass and metal. The acid is used in approximately 50 U.S. refineries, as well as in other industries. In a refinery, it is used as a catalyst in the creation of a blending agent for high-octane gasoline. Exposure to the acid causes burns, pain, erythema and destruction of deep tissue layers, including bone.

CSB is calling for a review in the wake of the 2018 Husky Energy refinery explosion and fire, which injured 36 workers and led to the evacuation of a large population of Superior, WI. After this and another refinery incident, CSB conducted a public hearing at which members of the surrounding communities expressed concerns about the effectiveness of community notifications in a catastrophic release.

Call For Topics You Want To See Here.

In previous newsletters I asked if you the readers had a topic they felt would be useful and interesting to the general membership, to be summarized in a Newsletter item, or to be presented at one of our chapter meetings. If you do have a topic, please send it to me, Charles Von Dietsch, my email address is on the front page of this newsletter. Please feel free to contact me or any of the Board members with any questions or concerns about the Chapter or with Technical or General Meeting topics you would like to see presented. They will be brought to the rest of the Chapter Executive Board for discussion on the possible use of your idea as a meeting topic to be presented. You will be provided with feedback concerning the decision to use your suggested topic or not. Just about any safety related item is welcomed, either an on-the-job topic, or one for family safety at home or on vacation, a near miss incident, local regulation, or federal regulation update will be welcome. There are a few guidelines that we follow which were outlined way back in June of 2016 when we published the first new chapter membership newsletter. Nothing political, inflammatory, or insulting to any other person – member of this chapter, or the Society – or non-member will be put in this newsletter. Items that describe a serious violation of safety standards are encouraged and will be allowed in the newsletter, or as a live topic. Specifics that might be identifiable to a person will be removed unless the suggested item is supplied to us with the required written permissions to use some personalized details for accuracy of the incident or experience. This is an easy way for you to become more involved in the chapter, so give it a try. Remember, this is YOUR Chapter and we need and look forward to your support, assistance, and participation.

Our Next Scheduled Chapter Meetings.

The scheduled Chapter meeting for October 3, 2019 is to be an Executive Board meeting to conduct Chapter business and last minute items for the PDC on October 24 & 25, 2019 being held at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY. This board meeting will be held at 1376 Route 9, Wappingers Falls, NY at 6:00 PM.

The Scheduled November Chapter Meeting for November 8, 2019 will be held at Rockland County Fire Training Center, 35 Fireman's Memorial Drive, Pomona, NY with a start time of 9:00 AM. All chapter members are welcomed to attend if their work scheduling allows.

The scheduled December 12, 2019 Chapter Technical Meeting is planned to be held at the offices of ECCO III at 201 Saw Mill River Road, Yonkers, NY with a start time of 6:00 P.M. Executive Board members are reminded that there is an Executive Board meeting scheduled in the same location beginning at 5:00 P.M. to discuss Chapter Business.