



Hudson River Valley Chapter Newsletter

May 2020

Volume 4, Number 11

In This Issue

- National Society Election Results
- Did You Know Dental Safety
- COVID-19 Recordkeeping Relaxed
- Pandemic Enforcement Priorities
- Networking is Important Now
- Hurricane Season Starts June 1
- Chapter Chatter (New Item)

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.**

Newsletter Editor:

Charles R. Von Dietsch Jr.
"cvondietsch@yahoo.com"

National ASSP Election Results Are In.

The National Society Elections are concluded and the election results are completed. The ASSP welcomes and congratulates the new leaders of our Society. The terms of office for these new leaders begins on July 1, 2020. Here is the new leadership team;

President ASSP – Deborah R. Roy

Senior Vice-President – Christine M. Sullivan

President-Elect – Bradley D. Giles

Director At Large – Maribeth A. Anderson

Vice-President, Finance – Linda M. Tapp

Vice-President, Practices and Standards – Connie L. Muncy

Region I Vice President – Royal Willard

Region IV Vice President – Daniel Slattery

Region VIII Vice President – Edward Zimmer

Construction Practice Specialty Assistant Administrator – Randall C. Butler

Ergonomics Practice Specialty Assist. Administrator – Anjua Patil

Industrial Hygiene Practice Specialty – Peter J. Engelbert

Management practice Specialty – Stacy A. Brooks

Military Practice Specialty – Marjorie J. McDonald

Training & Communications Practice Specialty – Matthew Spencer

Common Interest Group Assistant Administrator – Women In Safety Excellence – Camille Oakes

Region II Area A Director – Marc S. Towers

Region III Area Director South – Matthew F. Herron

Region VI Area Director Northern Area – Daniel Ashworth

Region VII Area Director North – Brian Oczepek

Region VII Area Director Central Area – Matthew A Summers

Region IX Area Director Area 2 – Gbolahan Kamil Abiodun

Did You Know?

Do you have a close relative or good friend that works in a Dental Office? OSHA has Interim Guidelines to **keep dentist office workers safe** from coronavirus exposure get a copy for them to stay safe.

OSHA Relaxes Recordkeeping Requirements for COVID-19 Cases.

In our March 2020 Issue we had an article about the Relaxed Recordkeeping Requirements for COVID-19 cases under the interim guidelines in effect at that time. As with all things dealing with COVID-19, those guidelines have been tweaked. So in the Chapter's effort to keep you and your employees safe and in compliance, this topic is being revisited for this issue of the Newsletter. So here is the latest obtained Relaxed Interim Guidelines as of mid-April 2020.

According to an agency press release, employers "other than those in the health care industry, emergency response organizations (e.g., emergency medical, firefighting and law enforcement services) and correctional institutions" generally will not be required to record COVID-19 cases because they "may have difficulty making determinations about whether workers who contracted COVID-19 did so due to exposures at work. "Until further notice, OSHA will not enforce its recordkeeping requirements ([1904.7](#)) to require these employers to make work-relatedness determinations for COVID-19 cases, except where: (1) There is objective evidence that a COVID-19 case may be work-related; and (2) the evidence was reasonably available to the employer."

The agency states that the interim guidance "will provide certainty to the regulated community and help employers focus their response efforts on implementing good hygiene practices in their workplaces and otherwise mitigating COVID-19's effects."

Former OSHA administrator David Michaels responded immediately after the guidance was released. "OSHA is kidding, right?" Michaels wrote on his Twitter account.

Jordan Barab, who served as OSHA deputy assistant secretary during the Obama administration, also reacted swiftly, tweeting, "You know what else might 'help employers focus their response efforts?' An enforceable OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard."

OSHA notes in an April 10 memo that the guidance is intended to be time-limited to the current public health crisis.

OSHA Details Enforcement Priorities To Area Offices In Pandemic.

OSHA is instructing area directors to prioritize COVID-19 related inspections according to a workplace's risk of exposure and in coordination with [Regional Offices](#). An [April 13, 2020 memo](#) from OSHA states that the agency's interim enforcement response plan gives "flexibility and discretion for our field offices to maximize OSHA's impact in securing safe workplaces for workers in this evolving environment."

Fatalities and imminent-danger exposures related to the pandemic will take priority for onsite inspections. Covered establishments with "high" to "very high" risk levels, such as health care organizations and first responders, will be given "particular attention".

Meanwhile, establishments with medium or lower exposure risk levels may not have an onsite inspection – even if workers file complaints.

"In such cases, area offices will use the informal procedures for investigating alleged hazards," the memo states. "Inadequate responses to a phone/fax investigation should be considered for an onsite inspection in accordance with the [Field Operations Manual](#)."

The memo provides examples of organizations at each risk level, as well as a sample letter to employers for COVID-19 related enforcement activities, a sample hazard alert letter and a sample alleged violation description for [General Duty Clause](#) citations, along with guidance for OSHA compliance safety and health officers during inspections.

"Workers requesting inspections, complaining of coronavirus exposure, or reporting illnesses may be protected under one or more whistleblower statutes and will be informed of their protections from retaliations," an April 13 agency press release states.

Acting Administrator Loren Sweatt added: "OSHA is committed to protecting the health and safety of America's workers during this challenging time in our nation's history. Today's guidance outlines commonsense procedures for investigating complaints related to the coronavirus while also ensuring the safety of workers, employers and inspectors."

Networking Is Important in a Time of Physical Distancing.

What does networking look like in a time of physical distancing? The short answer is it looks like a screen.

Many of the human interactions we're used to having in person are happening online these days, from Mother's Day brunch to graduations. For some of us, that feels strange – even disappointing. With all that digital fatigue, as well as the new responsibilities that have come with the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be easy to postpone or ignore new networking opportunities.

But networking is all about connection and long-time thinking – two things at which safety professionals excel under any conditions. Whether you're using online tools or standing in a room passing out business cards, networking allows you to spend time with others who share your experiences and concerns. Whether you're an emerging safety leader or a seasoned professional, networking is a chance to find the guidance, support and confidence you need to realize your goals.

Networking isn't the same right now, but its impact will be felt in a new and exciting ways that we can't even begin to measure. Here are five reasons to keep reaching out while you are staying in.

Reason 1 – Social Isolation Isn't Good for Mental Health: It's difficult to understate the importance of relationships in staying mentally and physically healthy. Being alone or experiencing feelings of loneliness can have a profoundly negative impact on the body's ability to function and thrive. Social isolation for an extended period can even result in depression, increased blood pressure or inflammatory responses. One recent analysis of 148 studies on premature death found that people with strong relationships had a 50% higher chance of survival over an average of more than seven years.

The more positive side of this research is that maintaining connections – even from a distance – can help make us stronger. Networking is not only a great way to form and nurture professional bonds; it also gives you the chance to spread positivity by introducing others in your circle.

Reason 2 – Learning from Peers Will Help Protect Workers: Anyone who has conducted safety training will tell you that social learning is powerful. While instructor led exercises and assigned readings are important pieces of the professional development puzzle, the informal conversations learners have before and after a course also help improve retention and build motivation. In our profession, which frequently finds practitioners working alone as full-time safety advocates on their job sites, learning from peers is that much more critical. Being part of a vibrant community of safety professionals is key to staying on top of the latest risk mitigation strategies, challenging old assumptions and helping your organization develop a culture that empowers teams and saves lives.

Reason 3 – Connecting Is an Act of Compassion and Warmth: We never know what the people around us are experiencing. But this time of physical distancing, it's a safe bet that the people you encounter are coping with things they've never faced before. Maybe they're juggling work responsibilities and teaching their children at home. Maybe they're worried about the safety and health of loved ones. Even in networking situations, where professionals typically don't discuss the details of their personal lives, you have an opportunity to show compassion.

In practice, compassion could mean being patient if someone arrives late or forgets your name. It could also mean intentionally listening more, rather than speaking about your own achievements, or directly asking people how you could help them advance their careers.

Reason 4 – Your Career Isn't on Pause, Despite Many Changes: Many safety professionals are busier than ever protecting workers on the job with increased sanitation and PPE use, return-to-work policies and remote training methods. Others have had their positions cut, aren't able to find work or have been furloughed in the wake of our new global business environment. Whether you fall into one of those camps or somewhere else entirely, one thing is certain: Time and your career are moving forward.

Reason 5 – Forming New Professional Relationships Is Fun: Did you know safety professionals can be a lot of fun? Despite being seriously focused on protecting people from serious risks, our community is made up of inherently social people who appreciate a good laugh. Similar to safety, networking has a perception problem. Those who believe networking was devised to torture them with small talk and is only necessary during a job search will be pleased to discover the truth: It is what you make of it.

During this period of increased loneliness for many, with days that can easily blend together, making space for novelty and playfulness is essential. Try attending your next networking event with something lighthearted to share, whether it's a funny story, a game or an interesting video you found online. Your new connections will thank you for it.

Don't Look Now, BUT - June 1 Starts Hurricane Season 2020.

Hurricane season is upon us again on June 1, 2020. With that fact OSHA reminds u that the OSHA webpage for [Hurricane Preparedness and Response](#) provides information to protect workers who respond to hurricane recovery efforts. The [Preparedness page](#) outlines the warnings and watches used for hurricanes, including the five categories used to rate the strength of a hurricane. The page also contains information on creating evacuation plans and assembling supply kits if they are deemed necessary.

The [Response/Recovery page](#) features a link to OSHA's Hurricane eMatrix, which has information on hazard exposures and risk assessments for hurricane response ad recovery work. The information in the matrix is organized based on the types of activities performed so that it is easy for workers to identify the precautions they should take based on the tasks they will be performing.

Each employer is responsible for the safety and health of its workers and for providing a safe and healthful workplace for its workers. Employers are required to protect workers from the anticipated hazards associated with the response and recovery operations that workers are likely to conduct. For additional information on Worker's Rights, Employer Responsibilities, and other services OSHA offers, visit OSHA's [Employers Page](#), [Workers Page](#) and [Publications](#).

Chapter Chatter

To all chapter members and friends who receive our Newsletter, I am trying something new with this issue. I will be inserting this section I am calling "Chapter Chatter." In it there will be notices of interest such as chapter board meetings, Technical meetings, announcements about any special meetings or training available to us to participate in. I will also ask your input on topics that you would like to see in our newsletters, or discussed at a Technical Meeting. After all, it is your chapter and you should have a say in what we present. So on with information for you, concerning you, and including you the members of the chapter.

Our Chapter Executive Board Meeting was held on Thursday May 7, 2020 using the ZOOM on line teleconference service. The Board discussed the 2020 PDC, and how to hold it – if we have it. This is the part where you - the members - come in with your feelings, thoughts and opinions. Would you or could you support a one day duration for the 2020 PDC if it is decided to be held using a virtual presentation platform, with limited in person participation. The Board is having serious discussions about this trying to observe the remaining New York Pause restrictions in our areas as of today, and attempting to look into the future to see if we can hold the PDC with a resurgence of the Coronavirus beginning to take hold in some areas. Your safety is the utmost thought in our minds. Please let us know your opinions.

The next scheduled Chapter Executive Board Meeting is for June 25, 2020 and will be held once again using the ZOOM Teleconference platform with a planned start time of 5:30 P.M. The minutes of these meetings are published on our chapter webpage for you to read over if you want to see what is covered during these meetings. In fact, all of the Chapter Meeting minutes as well as our old issues of the Chapter Newsletters are available for you to read through on the webpage. This is the link to the files page on our website for you to see these chapter documents: <https://hudsonrivervalley.assp.org/files/>. As the old television commercial stated..."Try it – You'll like it!"

Stay safe, and stay healthy. Hopefully we can meet face to face soon. As a reminder, my email contact information is cvondietsch@yahoo.com for your comments and or suggestions.

Thank You

Charles R. Von Dietsch Jr.

Chapter Secretary/Newsletter Editor