



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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Increased Risk for Legionella Because of COVID.

Building Managers and employers are being warned by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as a Canadian Safety and Health Training Center that facilities which have had reduced occupancy or have been unoccupied during the COVID-19 pandemic are at an increased risk for bacterial growth such as Legionella in the workplace's water systems.

The Workers Health and Safety Center designated by the Canadian Government as Ontario's Health and Safety Training Center in August warned of Legionella bacteria in government buildings or any building that goes more than one week with low or no occupancy. The center specifically mentioned workplaces in which processes using water, or water-based fluids, like metal working fluids, have been left to stagnate. According to CDC, stagnant or standing water in a plumbing system can increase the risk for growth and spread of Legionella. This could leave workers, especially those with weakened immune systems, at increased risk of contracting potentially deadly Legionnaires' disease from the water system when buildings reopen and employees return to the workplace.

The government agency Public Services and Procurement Canada in June published an updated safety alert that provides minimum requirements for building water systems. They include the following:

- Periodic flushing
- Maintaining trap seals
- Annual potable water sampling and Legionella testing
- Completion of the water system's return-to-occupancy checklist

CDC provides eight steps to minimize Legionella risk in its **guidance** on reopening buildings after a prolonged shutdown or reduced operation. The steps include developing a comprehensive water management program, ensuring proper maintenance and settings for water heaters, and cleaning decorative water features.

OSHA's COVID-19 Guidance on Workplace Ventilation.

Ensuring adequate ventilation throughout the work environment can help to maintain a safe and healthy workplace. Employers should work with a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professional to consider steps to optimize building ventilation. An HVAC professional can ensure that the ventilation system is operating as intended. The following tips can help reduce the risk of exposure to the coronavirus:

1. Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.
2. Ensure all HVAC systems are fully functional, especially those shut down or operating at reduced capacity during the pandemic.
3. Remove or redirect personal fans to prevent blowing air from one worker to another.
4. Use HVAC system filters with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating of 13 or higher, where feasible.
5. Increase the HVAC system's outdoor air intake. Open windows or other sources of fresh air where possible.
6. Be sure exhaust air is not pulled back into the building from HVAC air intakes or open windows.
7. Consider using portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to increase clean air, especially in higher-risk areas.
8. When changing filters, wear appropriate personal protective equipment. ASHRAE recommends N95 respirators, eye protection (safety glasses, goggles, or face shields), and disposable gloves.
9. Make sure exhaust fans in restrooms are fully functional, operating at maximum capacity, and are set to remain on.
10. Encourage workers to report any safety and health concerns.

For more information, visit www.osha.gov/coronavirus or call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742).

Respiratory Protection Guidance for Long term Care Facilities.

OSHA has issued respiratory protection guidance focused on protecting workers in nursing homes, assisted living and other long-term care facilities (LTCFs) from occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the coronavirus. The action marks the Department's latest step to ensure the availability of respirators and follows President Donald J. Trump's Memorandum on Making General Use Respirators Available.

Source control measures are recommended for everyone in healthcare facilities, including LTCFs, even if the wearer does not have symptoms of the coronavirus. The guidance describes various source control measures, including cloth face coverings, facemasks, and FDA-cleared or authorized surgical masks. Healthcare providers should wear source control products/devices at all times while inside a LTCF, including in breakrooms or other spaces where they might encounter other people.

Healthcare providers who are in close contact with a LTCF resident with suspected or confirmed coronavirus infection must use a NIOSH-approved N95 filtering facepiece respirator or equivalent or higher-level respirator, as required by OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard. Employers should reassess their engineering and administrative controls, such as ventilation and practices for physical distancing, hand hygiene, and cleaning/disinfecting surfaces, to identify changes that could avoid over-reliance on respirators and other personal protective equipment. In light of the essential need for adequate supplies of respirators during the coronavirus pandemic, OSHA has temporarily allowed for some enforcement flexibility regarding respirators. Visit OSHA's COVID-19 webpage for information on various respirator enforcement memoranda.

OSHA Announces \$2,856,533 In Coronavirus Violations.

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic through Nov. 5, 2020, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued 204 citations arising from inspections for violations relating to coronavirus, resulting in proposed penalties totaling \$2,856,533.

OSHA inspections have resulted in the agency citing employers for violations, including failures to:

- Implement a [written respiratory protection program](#);
- Provide a medical evaluation, respirator fit test, training on the proper use of a respirator and personal protective equipment;
- [Report](#) an injury, illness or fatality;
- Record an injury or illness on OSHA [recordkeeping forms](#); and
- Comply with the [General Duty Clause](#) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970

OSHA has withdrawn a citation issued on Oct. 23, 2020, to Mercy Medical Center in Rockville Centre, New York, (Inspection #1473958 with proposed penalty of \$9,639) after the employer provided evidence of a good faith attempt at complying with the standard in question.

OSHA has already announced citations relating to the coronavirus arising out of 178 inspections, which can be found at [dol.gov/newsroom](https://www.dol.gov/newsroom). In addition to those inspections, the 26 inspections below have resulted in coronavirus-related citations totaling \$369,404 from OSHA relating to one or more of the above violations from Oct. 30 to Nov. 5, 2020. OSHA provides more information about individual citations at its [Establishment Search website](#), which it updates periodically.

A full list of what standards were cited for each establishment, as well as the inspection number – [are available here](#). An OSHA standards database can be found [here](#).

Resources are available on the agency's [COVID-19 webpage](#) to help employers comply with these standards.

Construction Advisory Committee Charter Renewed.

The Secretary of Labor has renewed the [OSHA Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health](#) (ACCSH) for two years as [published](#) in the federal register on November 6, 2020.

ACCSH advises the Department of Labor and OSHA on upcoming standards affecting the construction industry and “the administration of safety and health provisions” in the [Construction Safety Act of 1969](#). All but one of the committee's 15 members' terms expire on May 13, OSHA states. Five members represent construction employers and five represent employees. The other third of the committee breaks down as follows:

- Two members from state safety and health agencies
- Two public members “qualified by knowledge and experience to make a useful contribution to the work of ACCSH
- One representative selected by the secretary of health and human services

ACCSH [met virtually and via teleconference](#) July 1, 2020 and approved motions calling for OSHA to update the powered industrial trucks standard for construction ([1910.178](#)) and the Hazard Communication Standard ([1910.1200](#)), among other actions.

Better Physical Therapy Outcomes for Workers Lower Back Injuries.

According to the results of a recent study from the Workers Compensation Research Institute, a lower back injury has been associated with better outcomes if beginning physical therapy days, not weeks, after suffering the injury.

Researchers analyzed nearly 26,000 workers compensation claims for low back pain and injuries from October 2015 through March 2017, all of which involved at least seven lost workdays. The researchers also looked at detailed medical transactions involving those claims through March 2018.

On average, starting physical therapy 30 or more days post-injury led to 58% longer stints on temporary disability compared with starting physical therapy within three days. Additionally, delaying physical therapy 15 to 30 days resulted in a 24% longer time on temporary disability.

Other findings:

- The average medical cost per claim for workers who started physical therapy more than 30 days after a low back injury was 24% higher than for workers who started PT within three days.
- Workers whose PT started more than 30 days post-injury were up to 47% more likely to receive opioid prescriptions compared with those who started PT within three days.
- Workers who started PT more than 30 days post-injury had an attorney involved in the workers' comp process 27% of the time, compared with 13% to 15% of the time for workers who began PT within two to three days post-injury.

While the study cannot conclude that early PT causes better outcomes, it does suggest that the potential benefits of early PT should be considered when planning care for these injuries. This is a comprehensive study that shows a strong association between PT timing and outcomes for workers with low back pain," John Ruser, WCRI President and CIO, said in a press release.

Chapter Chatter

Our last Chapter Executive Board Meeting was held on Thursday October 15, 2020 using the ZOOM on line teleconference service. **At that meeting the executive board was informed by Matthew McDonald that the National ASSP Organization has told Chapter Leaders that members who have lost their income source due to COVID-19 impact can continue as members for free – no dues will be required – until the economy recovers.** This information was sent to the general membership in a special email message directing them to the National ASSP webpage with the form to fill out and submit for membership fees to be waived. The Chapter's next scheduled Board Meeting is on Thursday December 10, 2020 at 5:30 P.M.

A Joint Virtual Technical Meeting with ASSP New Jersey and Connecticut Valley Chapters was held on Thursday November 19, 2020 beginning at 12:00 PM. The topic was "How to Assess and Reduce Risk" presented by Mr. Frank Gesualdo of Liberty Mutual. Virtual Joint Technical Meetings are scheduled for December 15, 2020 with Hudson Valley Federal Field Safety and Health Council, and on December 17, 2020 with ASSP New York City Chapter.

Thought Of The Day:

"I don't like that man. I must get to know him better." – Abraham Lincoln.

Minutes of all chapter meetings and all newsletters are published on our chapter webpage for you to read if you want to see what is covered during these meetings, or items in those newsletters. These are available for as far back as 2016. We have posted many of the Presentations from past Technical Meetings as well. This is the link to the files page on our website for you to review these chapter documents:

<https://hudsonrivervalley.assp.org/files/>.

Stay safe, and stay healthy. Hopefully we can meet face to face soon. If needed for any questions you may have about our Chapter activities, my email address is: cvondietsch@yahoo.com