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News and Views on Occupational Safety, Health and Compliance

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What are the benefits of a flu vaccine?

There are many reasons to get an influenza (flu) vaccine each year. Flu vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones against flu and its potentially serious complications.

Below is a summary of the benefits of flu vaccination and selected scientific studies that support these benefits.

Flu vaccination can keep you from getting sick with flu.

- Flu vaccination prevents millions of illnesses and flu-related doctor's visits each year. For example, during 2019-2020, flu vaccination prevented an estimated 7.5 million influenza illnesses, 3.7 million influenza-associated medical visits, 105,000 influenza-associated hospitalizations and 6,300 influenza-associated deaths.
- During seasons when flu vaccine viruses are similar to circulating flu viruses, the flu vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of having to go to the doctor for the flu by 40% to 60%.

Flu vaccination has been shown in several studies to reduce severity of illness in people who are vaccinated, but still get sick.

- A 2021 study showed that among adults, flu vaccination was associated with a 26% lower risk of ICU admission and a 31% lower risk of death from flu, compared to those who were unvaccinated.
- A 2018 study showed that among adults hospitalized with flu, vaccinated patients were 59% less likely to be admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) than those who had not been vaccinated. Among adults

in the ICU with flu, vaccinated patients on average spent four fewer days in the hospital than those who were not vaccinated.

Flu vaccination can reduce the risk of flu-associated hospitalization.

- Flu vaccination prevents tens of thousands of hospitalizations each year. For example, during 2019-2020, flu vaccination prevented an estimated 105,000 flu-related hospitalizations.
- A 2014 study showed that flu vaccination reduced children's risk of flu-related pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) admission by 74% during flu seasons from 2010-2012. A 2017 study found that during 2009-2016, flu vaccines reduced the risk of flu-associated hospitalization among older adults by about 40% on average.
- A 2018 study showed that from 2012 to 2015, flu vaccination among adults reduced the risk of being admitted to an ICU with flu by 82%.

Flu vaccination is an important preventive tool for people with certain chronic health conditions.

- Flu vaccination has been associated with lower rates of some cardiac events among people with heart disease, especially among those who have had a cardiac event in the past year.
- Flu vaccination can reduce the risk of a flu-related worsening of chronic lung disease (for example, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) requiring hospitalization.



- Among people with diabetes and chronic lung disease, flu vaccination also has been shown in separate studies to be associated with reduced hospitalizations from a worsening of their chronic condition.

Flu vaccination helps protect pregnant people during and after pregnancy.

- Vaccination reduces the risk of flu-associated acute respiratory infection in pregnant people by about one-half.
- A 2018 study showed that getting a flu

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Five ways employers can reduce workplace fatigue and burnout

According to the Mayo Clinic, workplace burnout is a special type of work-related stress — a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity. Although burnout is not technically a medical condition, it can have dramatic effects on both managers and employees. The sources of most workplace burnout are far-ranging and can be caused by not having enough vacation time, a lack of interest in your job, dysfunctional workplace dynamics, hazardous working conditions and more.

Therefore, as you can probably imagine, reducing workplace burnout amongst employees is necessary for any employer. If employees are experiencing effects of burnout, their work and productivity suffers, leaving them and the company in a worse place than before they even began the job. In this article, we are going to discuss five tactics employers can use to reduce workplace fatigue and burnout.

When you address workplace burnout, it is important to recognize its signs and symptoms. Ignored or unaddressed job burnout amongst employees can look like the following: excessive stress, fatigue, sadness, anger, or irritability, high blood pressure and vulnerability to illness. Here are five ways to address workplace burnout.

Promote work/life balance. There are numerous ways employers can help promote work-life balance — not just for employees, but also for themselves. It has been shown that a good work-life balance does wonders for job performance and employee morale. Luckily, in today's economy and post-COVID workplace environment, flexible and remote working is becoming more and more popular. Employees who have the option to maintain a hybrid work schedule or choose to work remotely have been shown to suffer from burnout less. If employers are able to provide employees with the option to work from home when they choose, it is not a bad idea. If this is not suitable for your company, there are other ways to promote a healthy balance between life and work.

Encouraging breaks amongst employees and focusing on productivity rather than the number of hours worked are two more ways to give employees more balance in their lives. Additionally, incorporating time for employees to volunteer during working hours has been shown to improve employee morale. According to the Pew Research

Center, millennials are more motivated by social action rather than just being paid when looking for employment. Taking this into account when trying to facilitate work-life balance could vastly help decrease employee burnout and fatigue.

Encourage employees to use vacation time. According to a 2022 study, more than half of Americans do not use all of their paid time off. In addition, 52% of employees with PTO say they have worked during time off. As shocking as this may be to some, it is a reality for a large portion of our employers. Lack of paid time off is one of the fastest ways employees can begin to suffer from employee burnout.

How can you motivate employees to take time off? You can try leading by example. In an interview with HRD, Arianna Huffington said that self-care is a vital investment in leadership. Using vacation time and taking healthy breaks is crucial to workplace success and can greatly decrease workplace burnout.

Prioritize workplace wellness and safety. One of the main ways employers can support employees is to create a safe and healthy work environment. If employees feel safe, they are much more likely to be happy at work and motivated to succeed. Additionally, a safe and healthy environment not only protects employees from injury and illness, but it also reduces employee absence, burnout and turnover.

Starting an official safety program is crucial to maintaining a healthy workforce, especially for industries that offer physically rigorous jobs such as manufacturing and construction. The Physical Capacity Profile (PCP) testing system is a one-of-a-kind program that companies all over the country use for post-employment testing to ensure their employees are safe. Utilizing a state-of-the-art proprietary software, the PCP machine completes a collection of multiple-strength measurements in as little as 30 minutes. Test report results are available to the medical professional and employer within minutes. The PCP testing system is compliant with both the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act, and has successfully undergone EEOC audits.

Practice open communication. Create a work environment in which open communication is regularly practiced and

welcomed. This is a great way to foster a healthy work environment, and reduce employee fatigue and burnout.

In a survey on the importance of communication, Fierce Inc. found that 86% of respondents blamed a lack of collaboration or ineffective communication for workplace failures. Without clear communication, employees lack direction and guidance, which can increase frustration and decrease motivation.

When employees are unsure of what they are supposed to do, who they are supposed to be in contact with and what they should expect from their jobs, they are much more likely to suffer from burnout and care less about their job. Practicing open communication strengthens employee morale and increases trust. Additionally, it can hold individual employees accountable, which in turn encourages them to fulfill their specific job responsibilities and feel more ownership over their work.

Create career paths and goals. According to Indeed, a career path is a career development program employees follow to advance in their role at your company. It provides a timeline that outlines short- and long-term goals for employees to accomplish so they can move up the ranks in their company. When employees view their jobs as a career rather than a placeholder in their lives, they are much more likely to experience increased morale and performance.

According to the American Psychological Association, 61% of employees reported experiencing workplace stress, which can take the form of anxiety, anger, fatigue and burnout. Additionally, the American Institute of Stress states that job stress costs U.S. companies over \$300 billion annually because of accidents, absenteeism, diminished productivity, employee turnover, workers' compensation, and direct legal and medical costs.

Therefore, it is crucial for employers to use practices that can reduce stress, boost morale and decrease burnout.

Occupational Health Services is committed to helping employers do everything they can to create a healthy and safe work environment. To learn more about PCP testing and other services, call 402-562-4480.

Source: Occupational Performance Corporation. PCP blog, February 2, 2022.

HazCom standard update coming before year's end?

SPRING 2022 REGULATORY AGENDA RELEASED



An update to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Hazard Communication standard could happen as soon as December, according to the Department of Labor's spring 2022 regulatory agenda.

Published June 21, the agenda — issued by the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs twice a year — provides the status of and projected dates for all potential regulations listed in three stages: pre-rule, proposed rule and final rule.

In this latest regulatory agenda, the HazCom standard update was moved from the proposed rule stage to the final rule stage.

OSHA's current Hazard Communication standard (1910.1200) is linked with the third edition of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, also known as GHS. In February 2021, OSHA issued a proposed rule to update the regulations to align with GHS' seventh edition.

Also listed in the final rule stage is a permanent COVID-19 standard for the health care industry. That's expected to appear sometime in the fall, OSHA administrator Doug Parker and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh indicated in separate Congressional hearings in the past four weeks.

OSHA's Infectious Diseases standard, meanwhile, is listed in the proposed rule stage, with a notice of proposed rulemaking slated for May at the earliest.

OSHA's Emergency Response standard moved from the pre-rule to the proposed rule stage, and a notice of proposed rulemaking is not expected to appear until at least May as well. That regulation will attempt to "address the full range of hazards or concerns currently facing emergency responders, and other workers providing skilled support," and provide performance specifications for protective clothing and equipment.

Meanwhile, the agency is reopening the rulemaking record on clarifying parts of its Walking-Working Surfaces standard. The agency planned to correct a formatting error in Table D-2 of that regulation and "revise the language of the requirements for stair rail systems to make them clearer and reflect OSHA's original intent."

The regulation was in the final rule stage in the fall 2021 regulatory agenda, released Dec. 10, but is now back to the proposed rule stage. OSHA's attempt to revise Table 1 of its silica standard for construction was moved from the proposed rule stage to the list of long-term actions. That means the agency is not expected to perform any work on that standard for at least six months.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration had one change from the fall 2021 regulatory agenda: A final rule requiring written safety programs for mobile equipment and powered haulage at surface mines or surface areas of underground mines could appear in October.

Source: Safety + Health magazine. safetyandhealthmagazine.com.

Workforce drug test positivity climbs to highest level in two decades

Recently, Quest Diagnostics released the latest findings from the Drug Testing Index™ (DTI). The DTI reveals drug use trends among the American workforce and positivity rates by industry sector. It is published annually as a public service for government, employers, policy-makers, media and the general public, and

includes workforce drug testing data since 1988.

For 2021, the rate of positive drug test results among America's workforce reached its highest level since 2001, and was up more than 30% in the combined U.S. workforce from an all-time low in 2010-2012.

"Our Drug Testing Index reveals several notable trends, including increased drug positivity rates in the safety-sensitive workforce responsible for keeping society safe, as well as higher rates of positivity in individuals tested after on-the-job accidents," said Barry Sample, PhD, senior science consultant for Quest Diagnostics.

What are the benefits of a flu vaccine?

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associated acute respiratory infection in pregnant people by about one-half.

- A 2018 study showed that getting a flu shot reduced a pregnant person's risk of being hospitalized with flu by an average of 40% from 2010-2016.
- A number of studies have shown that in addition to helping protect pregnant people from flu, a flu vaccine given during pregnancy helps protect the baby from flu for several months after birth, when he or she is too young to be vaccinated.

Flu vaccination can be lifesaving in children.

- A 2017 study was the first of its kind to show that flu vaccination can significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from flu.
- Being vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, including those who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies and young children, older people and people with certain chronic health conditions.

Despite the many benefits offered by flu

vaccination, only about half of Americans get an annual flu vaccine, and flu continues to cause millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and tens of thousands of deaths. Many more people could be protected from flu if more people are vaccinated.

Occupational Health Services offers flu vaccines at the workplace to help keep you protected. To learn more, call 402-562-4480.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. cdc.gov.

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Recognize the signs of impairment

Alcohol, cannabis, prescription drugs, fatigue and mental distress can all cause impairment in the workplace. “Impairment risks are everyone’s responsibility,” the National Safety Council says.

- 1. Spot the signs.** Are you or a co-worker less focused than usual, or acting differently? Consider taking a break or alerting others to evaluate the situation. Do not jump to conclusions about why someone might be impaired.
- 2. Start the conversation.** If you do not feel like yourself, assess your reactions and be honest with how you are feeling. For others, ask how they are feeling and if they need to take a break. It is not always easy to have this conversation,

but ignoring it could put you or your co-workers at risk.

- 3. Ask for assistance.** If you cannot work safely, ask for assistance from your supervisor or a nearby co-worker. Do the same for any co-workers showing signs of impairment.
- 4. Know your policies.** You can help prevent impairment-related hazards by learning more about your workplace’s policies. Ask your supervisor or human resources department about available employee assistance programs. Do not be afraid to seek help when you need it.

Source: Safety + Health magazine. www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com.

