Issue 46 *(May 2016)*

SPOTLIGHT

National Workplace Safety and Health Statistics in Brief 2016 Q1

22 workers lost their lives in the first quarter of 2016 with the Construction sector contributing to 40% of these fatal accidents. How is the situation with major and minor injuries? What is the leading cause of fatal injuries? Click here to find out more.

Connecting WSH Research and Practice

WHAT'S TRENDING

Recent plane collision highlights drone risks

The recent collision between a drone and an airplane highlights the need to address the risks surrounding the use of drones, the Chartered Institute of Insurance (CII) has said.

(Source: Strategic Risk Global)

More...

Relevance: There is an increased use of drones in recent times for surveillance and other intel-gathering activities. How can we minimise the risk of collision and protect employees working in the vicinity?

Employers turn to technology to improve workplace health

With most of its 12,000 employees involved in the manual work of building tunnels and track across London, Crossrail has taken an unusual tack in efforts to support workplace health: it has stressed the mental wellbeing of its staff.

(Source: FT Health)

More...

The WSH Institute organised a forum on 5th May 2016 at the Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre, which was well-attended by close to 400 people. The event brought together experts from various disciplines to share on research outcomes and good practices for a safe and healthy work environment. Click here for more information on the event. Presentation slides from the speakers are also available for download.

Making Safety Case a Reality

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore (IES) and Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE) will be organising a conference at the Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore, from 16-18th May to bring together international speakers familiar with safety case regimes. For more information, click here.

Relevance: How can technology be used to help the mental health of workers who operate in taxing environments?

RECOMMENDED READING FROM THE WSH INSTITUTE COLLECTION*
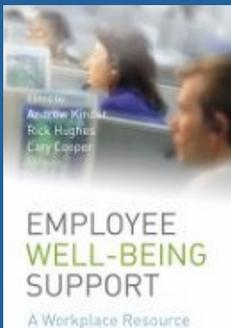
TITLE:
Employee Well-Being Support:
A Workplace Resource

AUTHOR:
Andrew Kinder, Rick Hughes, and
Cary L. Cooper.

AREA OF INTEREST:
Employee assistance programs
Job stress
Employees -- Mental health

Please use your QR code scanner to access the recommended reading titles on Stress Management

Click here to access WSH Institute's e-books collection.

* The WSH Institute Collection is a compilation of WSH-related resources accessible to the public through our collaboration with the National Library Board (NLB).

OWL HIGHLIGHTS

1 Improving safety among small organisations in the construction industry: Key barriers and improvement strategies

Date of publication: 2015
Source: Procedia Engineering

Unlike their larger counterparts, small organisations in the construction industry lack financial and human resources and leverage to develop and implement robust safety management systems, hence affecting their safety performances. This is a critical issue as the industry is one of the most dangerous industrial sectors, and is dominated by small

organisations. Among the identified key barriers faced by small organisations when implementing safety include:

(i) Client demands with high bargaining power causing intense competition and gaining of contracts are often prioritised over safety considerations

(ii) Negative perceptions towards safety, where small organisations perceive safety regulations as too excessive or complex

(iii) Lack of safety knowledge and safety training, in which small organisation owners do not have   sufficient knowledge to implement safety measures or appreciate its importance

(iv) Poor safety culture, where a lack of management commitment worsens the already poor safety attitudes of the workforce

The results show that all the key barriers are external factors, thus small organisations have limited to no control over them. Fierce competition underpinned by lack of safety commitment from the client and the use of lowest bid price to evaluate tender submissions force small organisations to reduce their costs by any means necessary, including neglecting safety. As such, strategies to address them should also involve external stakeholders. The paper proposes these strategies:

(i) Client safety roles, where they acknowledge that safety complements quality and schedule, and enquire about contractor's safety performance

(ii) Safety training, in which free safety training courses or incentives are provided to small organisations, as well as assessing the effectiveness of current safety programmes

(iii) Enforcement of safety regulations, where the government should effectively monitor and enforce them in addition to coming up with incentive programmes to encourage small organisations to focus on safety

To address the barriers effectively and improve safety performance in this sector, government, clients, and large organisations need to play important roles in changing the norms and culture in the industry.

To read more, click here

2 Sedentary work: Evidence on an emergent work health and safety issue

Date of publication: March 2016
Source: Safe Work Australia

Prolonged sitting at work is common among workers, with 81% of Australian workers reporting some exposure and one half of workers reporting sitting often or all of the time at work. Besides office-based occupations, other occupations such as crane operators and truck drivers are also exposed to long hours of sitting. The harm linked to prolonged sitting is likely due to:

(i)   Insufficient dynamic muscle activity
(ii)   Insufficient energy expenditure
(iii) Insufficient movement/lack of postural variety
(iv) Diminished gravitational resistance

Prolonged sitting exposure is associated with a range of adverse health effects such as:

(i)   Mortality
(ii)   Cardio-metabolic outcomes and risk factors
(iii) Musculoskeletal disorders
(iv) Mental health
(v)   Reduced work outcomes

To reduce prolonged sitting at work, initiatives could be focussed on the design of safe work systems, work tasks, work tools and the individual worker. Multi-component interventions targeting multiple elements of work systems appear to have been most successful. Additionally, the paper provides suggestions for simple interventions that can interrupt prolonged occupational sitting, such as alternate between standing/walking, adopting ''active'' sitting options and active commuting during non-productive breaks.

To read more, click here

3 Workplace stress: A collective challenge

Date of publication: 2016
Source: International Labour Organisation

Workers today face significant changes and challenges and are under greater pressure to meet the demands of modern working life. Some of the psychosocial hazards that contribute to a stressful working environment include: increased competition and higher expectations on performance and longer working hours. Workers' mental health and well-being are also affected by organisational changes and restructuring, reduced work opportunities, increasing precarious work, the fear of losing their jobs, massive layoffs and unemployment and decreased financial stability, due to economic recession and changes in labour relations. Meanwhile, work-related stress also affects productivity, competitiveness and the public image of the enterprise due to increased absenteeism, reduced motivation, satisfaction and commitment, and high staff turnover. These have

negative impact in terms of human, social and financial costs. Drawing attention to global trends on work-related stress, this report aims to raise awareness of its prevalence and impact on workers' health, safety and wellbeing, and its influence on the enterprise and its productivity. It also presents relevant initiatives, strategies and actions on the prevention of work-related stress and the promotion of workers' mental health.

To read more, click here

4 7 principles for successful return to work: A guide for occupational therapists in Singapore

Date of publication: January 2016
Source: Singapore Association of Occupational Therapists and Tan Tock Seng Hospital

There is increasing evidence that work is good for an injured worker's health and wellbeing. It is also an essential part of injured worker's rehabilitation. In Singapore, Return-To-Work (RTW) programmes for workers with an injury or medical condition is at its infancy stage. There are currently no structured programmes in place where injured/ill workers could benefit from early RTW intervention to facilitate them to return to their previous employment. The 7 principles introduced in this guide are workplace-based strategies which have been found to reduce work disability duration and costs. They are implemented in 4 stages throughout the worker's rehabilitation.

Stage 1: Early contact

• The employer makes an early and considerate contact with the injured/ill worker

Stage 2: Planning for the worker's return

• Identify a key person (internal or external) that has the responsibility to coordinate RTW
• With the worker's consent, employers and health care providers to communicate with each other about workplace requirements
• The employer makes an offer of modified work to injured/ill workers so they can return early and safely to work activities suitable to their abilities

Stage 3: Implementing a successful RTW programme

• RTW planners ensure that the plan supports the returning worker, taking into consideration potential pitfalls and barriers to cooperation identified by supervisors and co-workers
• Supervisors are trained in work disability prevention and included in RTW planning

<u>Stage 4: Creating an RTW-friendly workplace</u>

• The workplace has a strong commitment to health and safety which is demonstrated by the behaviours of the workplace parties

The paper also includes a range of competencies and attributes of Occupational Therapists who facilitate RTW, which can be developed/enhanced. These include active listening, ability to communicate and relate well to wide range of personalities, and respecting and maintaining confidentiality.

To read more, click here

Other Useful Resources

• **Interventions to increase the reporting of occupational diseases by physicians: A Cochrane systematic review** *(Occupational & Environment Medicine)*
• **Effect of workplace counselling interventions launched by Workplace Health Promotion and Tobacco Control Centers in Taiwan: An evaluation based on the Ottawa Charter** *(PLOS One)*
• **Proactive vs. reactive workplace health management** *(The Wellness & Safety Report)*
• **Investigating the effectiveness of fall prevention plan and success factors for program-based safety interventions** *(Science Direct)*

*OWLinks is brought to you by **Workplace Safety and Health Institute, Singapore**. OWLinks enables leaders and professionals to keep abreast of the latest WSH development and trends from around the world.*

An Initiative of   **The Observatory for WSH Landscape (OWL) is a function of Workplace Safety and Health Institute. OWL aims to observe, analyse and communicate changes in the workforce, workplace and working life to researchers, policy**

makers and industries in Singapore and Asia.