



WisCon Words of Wisdom

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May Awareness Topics

All Month Long:

[Healthy Vision](#)

Physical Fitness

[Mental Health](#)

[Better Hearing](#)

[Building Safety](#)

May 6-10: [National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction](#)

Upcoming Webinars

Public Sector:

June 25th: [Heat Stress](#)

August 27th: [Confined Space Hazard Awareness](#)

October 29th: [Work-related Asthma](#)

We want to hear from you!

What content would you like to see in an upcoming newsletter? Let us know [here](#).

National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls

Join the national safety stand-down to prevent falls in construction May 6th-10th. Fatalities caused by falls from elevation continue to be a leading cause of death for construction employees, accounting for 395 of the 1069 construction fatalities recorded in 2022 (BLS data). **Fatalities due to falls are preventable.** The National Safety Stand-Down raises fall hazard awareness across the country in an effort to stop fall fatalities and injuries.

What is a safety stand-down?

A Safety Stand-Down is a voluntary event for employers to talk directly to employees about safety. Any workplace can hold a stand-down by taking a break to focus on "Fall Hazards" and reinforcing the importance of "Fall Prevention."

How to conduct a safety stand-down?

Companies can conduct a Safety Stand-Down by taking a break to have a toolbox talk or another safety activity such as conducting safety equipment inspections, developing rescue plans, or discussing job specific hazards. A Safety Stand-Down should provide an opportunity for employers and employees to talk about hazards, protective methods, and the company's safety policies, goals and expectations.

To find out more or share information about your event, please visit OSHA's [National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction](#) webpage.

Employee Representation During OSHA Inspections

Within the last 2 months, [the Department of Labor published a final rule](#) to clarify the rights of employees to authorize a representative to accompany an OSHA compliance during an inspection. This final rule clarifies that workers may authorize another employee or a non-employee to serve as their representative. However, for a non-employee to accompany the inspector, they must be reasonably necessary to conduct of an effective and thorough inspection.

Occupational / Work-Related Asthma

By: Kelli Humber, MPH



Asthma is a common condition, affecting millions of people worldwide. But did you know that a significant portion of adult asthma cases can be linked to the workplace? Occupational or work-related asthma, caused by exposure to airborne irritants in work environments, affects approximately 10 to 25 percent of adults with asthma according to John Hopkins.

Work-related asthma occurs when individuals are exposed to inhaled irritants such as dusts, gases, fumes, and vapors in their workplace. The CDC notes there are over 300 known or suspected substances in the workplace that can cause or worsen asthma. The symptoms of work-related asthma mirror those of regular asthma exacerbation and may include wheezing, shortness of breath, runny nose, nasal congestion, eye irritation, and chest tightness. These symptoms often worsen during exposure to workplace irritants and may improve when away from work.

Various substances found in different occupational settings can trigger work-related asthma. Examples include chemical dusts and vapors (e.g., isocyanates, trimellitic anhydride, solvents, ammonia), animal substances (e.g., bacterial dusts, dander, mites, protein dusts), organic dusts (e.g., cereals, flour, grains, sugar, wood), cotton, flax, hemp dust (e.g., dusts from cotton and textile industries), and metals (e.g., chromium, nickel sulfate, platinum, soldering fumes). It's essential to recognize these irritants to minimize exposure and reduce the risk of developing work-related asthma.

Preventing work-related asthma primarily involves avoiding exposure to triggers. This may entail changes in work processes, implementing industrial hygiene techniques, and having regular medical check-ups to monitor lung health.

Awareness of personal and family medical history of asthma can also help identify individuals at greater risk to occupational asthma.

Signs of work-related asthma can include symptoms getting better on weekends, vacations, or other times when away from work. However, in some cases, symptoms do not improve until an extended time away from the exposure or trigger. If you suspect your asthma symptoms might be work-related, tell your doctor about work exposures and possible asthma triggers, including your job, tasks, and the materials you use. Diagnosing occupational asthma typically involves a detailed medical history, physical examination, and diagnostic tests such as pulmonary function tests and chest X-rays. Treatment focuses on avoiding trigger substances and may include medications to control asthma symptoms.

Occupational asthma presents a significant health concern for individuals exposed to airborne irritants in the workplace. Recognizing the symptoms, identifying potential triggers, and implementing preventive measures are essential steps in managing this condition. By prioritizing lung health and taking proactive steps to minimize exposure to workplace irritants, individuals can reduce the risk of developing occupational asthma and lead healthier lives both at work and beyond.

Sources:

https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/asthma/causes_asthma.html

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/asthma/occupational-asthma#:~:text=Occupational%20asthma%20is%20a%20type,caused%20the%20asthma%20are%20avoided.>

<https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3707.pdf>

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