Workplace Safety and Health in the United States

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**Introduction**

We will be discussing the workplace safety and health in the United States. We will first begin with what is workplace safety and health. Second, we will cover different types of safety and health in the US. Third, we will conclude with what actions are being taken to increase the effectiveness of workplace safety and health.

Workplace Safety & Health refers to both physical factors that help prevent injury or harm, as well as those things that help maintain a healthy environment for employees at work—a safe place where they can go each day without fear of experiencing job-related illnesses or injuries.

Safety and Health is both Physical and Mental. Safety concerns the prevention of injuries to workers, as well as the prevention of workplace illness. On the other hand, health refers to protecting workers from exposure to workplace hazards, so that they do not suffer illness or injury. In addition, it also refers to maintaining a healthy environment.

**Types of Health and Safety in Workplaces.**

There are various different types of safety and health in the US that I will be discussing: hazards, hazards control, and ergonomics.

**a. Ergonomics**

Ergonomics is concerned with the design of workstations, work processes, and work environments to prevent musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) or injuries (Fasanya & Shofoluwe, 2018). MSDs are conditions caused by repetitive motion of the same body part over a prolonged period. The most common ones are repetitive strain injuries. These include carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis (toughness), tendonosis (tenderness), back strains and other trauma related issues such as overuse injuries. They are estimated to cost more than 700 billion dollars.

MSDs are not only limited to the most common repetitive strain injuries; however, there are others. These include other MSDs such as cases of wrist, elbow, and shoulder pain as a result of prolonged typing/keyboarding. Other MSDs include problems with the neck and jaw muscles, as well as drowsiness due to prolonged posture. This can be attributed to the fact that most workers sit at their workstations for long periods of time.

In order for ergonomics to be effective, it needs to be incorporated in the workplace. This will ensure that safety is maintained and workers will not suffer from MSDs or injuries. One of the employers' roles in implementing ergonomics is to provide training so employees know what they are doing when they are troubleshooting their workstation.

**b. Hazards.**

The second type of safety is Hazards. Hazards are those conditions that endanger workers' physical well-being and the health of the overall community (Council, 2021). Let's take for example the infamous coal mining; it is dangerous to all. It can cause issues such as black lung disease, which includes obstruction of the airways, chronic and acute respiratory problems, emphysema, inflammation of the lungs and cancer.

Hazards can be created by a number of occupations in today's workplace. This ranges from the obvious such as coal mining to less seen hazards such as swimming pools. Other hazards can be found in shops, construction sites, and many more places. Hazards are a major problem to any workplace. To ensure safety, employers need to ensure that they minimize them.

**c. Hazards Control.**

The last type of safety I will be discussing for this paper is Hazard Control which is concerned with reducing or eliminating the hazardous effects in various work settings. In order for an effective hazard control program to be set up and implemented successfully there needs to be a policy in place first.

In some cases, hazards such as coal dust can be controlled through ventilation systems and dust collection. Other types of hazards such as electric shock can be controlled through the use of protective equipment. Most hazards can be eliminated through proper working conditions and enforcing regulations. These should all be done by an employer in order to ensure the safety of their employees.

It is undeniable that workplace safety and health is an important topic to take care of. Employers need to ensure that they are taking care of this problem before it becomes a major issue. In addition, employees also need to ensure that they have the proper training, device, and workstation if they are in a workplace. All these things are important in ensuring safety and health of employees as well as the company itself. Therefore, in the event of unsafe workplace there is need to report it to the proper authorities and the company to ensure that safety and health becomes a priority in the US.

Lastly, I also believe that employees should be more aware of the risk factors they are exposed to on a daily basis while they are at work. I do not mean that they need to go after every single hazard out there but I would like them to realize what harm it can cause if not handled properly or overlooked. In this way, they can be proactive and try to do something about it before things get out of hand. That is why I feel that safety and health should not only be the employer's responsibility but also the employee's. Both parties need to do their part so that there will be a good working environment for them to be in.

**Efforts Taken to Increase Effectiveness of USA Workplace Safety and Health**

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is a part of the Department of Labor which is concerned with ensuring workers' safety. They accomplish this by inspecting businesses. OSHA also provides information to employers on how they can prevent injuries. In addition, they also provide information as well as resources to workers' on how they can stay safe while at work. This includes videos and fact sheets.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health is another government agency that works with workplaces in reducing risks (NIOSH). This is a part of the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and NIH (National Institute of Health). They work in conjunction with OSHA; however, they have different focus. Their main objective is to educate workers regarding keeping themselves safe at work. In addition, NIOSH has also developed an innovative tool called the NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards that can be used by employers as well as workers.

OSHA is concerned with worker's health. They are concerned with what happens when workers are injured or have a workplace illness. In order for employers to minimize workplace injuries and illnesses, they need to provide proper training for their employees. This training is referred to as occupational safety and health training (Reese, 2018). This training is needed to ensure that workers are aware of their health risks and how they can minimize them. This type of training is necessary in all workplaces, whether they are construction sites, retail stores or healthcare facilities.

Another effort being taken by USA workplaces to ensure safety and health at work is the use of safety signs. These signs are posted at various locations in a workplace to alert workers' regarding dangers in the workplace. For example, if there is a floor mat that has water on it, a sign will be placed on the mat indicating that there may be a slippery area.

Another method to boost workplace safety is through the use of appropriate and quality equipment and implementing actions to promote sound health practices. The use of boots, safety goggles, safety belts and work gloves are one of them. The importance of work gloves lies in the fact that it helps avoid: slips, cuts, punctures, abrasions and splinters. The growth in these products have been due to their ability to be affordable as well as having quality assurance and a good fit for the workers' hands. Employees are required to wear them at their workstations during working hours; thus, protecting them from potential accidents or other hazardous conditions. They come in different varieties depending on the type of industry or occupation that they are used for.

Topical training is another way to ensure the safety of workers' in a workplace. This type of training involves offering training about a specific issue that concerns the workplace (Duda, 2019). For example, OSHA can provide topical training for employers on how to avoid hazards in their workplace as well as how to implement an effective health and safety program. In addition, topical training may include both employees and management depending on the issues needing to be addressed.

OSHA has developed a website that is dedicated to providing information on and helping workers' cope with specific workplace issues. For example, the website provides information to workers on how they can respond with a first aid emergency situation that happens in their workplace. This website also gives them directions on where they can report an injury or illness at work.

Medical surveillance is another way to reduce accidental injuries and illnesses in workplaces. The medical surveillance program provides medical examinations for workers at their own cost. In addition, this program provides advice as well as resources to help workers cope with certain health issues that may arise at work. NIOSH also provides employers' educational resources so that they will be able to provide the necessary tools to help workers remain safe on the job.

Medical and safety records are helpful in documenting all injury, illness or death that may occur at work. These records should be kept confidential and secure. In addition, they should also be stored in a safe area. If any information is incorrect, the employer should update it immediately. These records help in the prevention of incidents because they hold records of previous incidents so that employers' can implement measures to avoid them (Mitchell, 2020).

Implementing a health surveillance program for employees: These programs are developed in order to monitor certain conditions or exposures that may affect their health. Examples include: High risk jobs: Some jobs, such as mining and operating heavy machinery, have high risks of injury as well as specific illnesses that can affect an employee's health. For example, working in a coal mine can expose employees to coal dust which is known to cause breathing problems and heart disease. High-risk workplaces: These are workplaces that have identified hazards which may result in workplace injuries or fatalities. Examples include contact with chemicals or chemicals used at work. High-risk individuals: These are workers that have increased health risks in their workplace due to special circumstances. For example, pregnant women and workers exposed to chemicals such as asbestos are at high risk of health problems. High risk behaviors: Over the years, OSHA has realized that how employees behave in a workplace can also increase their risk of injury or illness. This is the case for employees who fail to properly use protective equipment or fail to take frequent breaks from work.

Implementing an effective hazard communication program for all employees: This program involves educating workers on how to properly handle chemicals and other hazardous materials at work (Tupper & Smith, 2022). For example, a temporary prohibition of the use of a particular chemical will be implemented for a certain period of time. This is done in order to provide employees with adequate time to learn about the hazards associated with the chemical.

Employers are also required to provide emergency showers and eye flushes in case there is a spill of chemicals at work. This is under the premise that firefighters have access to the emergency shower and eye flush. In addition, employers are required to cooperate with local emergency response agencies when it comes to providing for safety at work. I think OSHA should be more involved in these types of issues because it relies on employers to take care of their employees. Sometimes employers choose not to put safeguards in place because it costs them more money, whether it is training or equipment, and those cost can be passed on to the employees. Employers should be responsible for putting the appropriate safety equipment in place for their employees' sake.

OSHA recommends that employers' be aware of their employees' health status and inform their supervisors to change their work schedule or job if it is necessary. This way, employees will still be able to fulfill their duties and not lose compensation for all the hours worked. Furthermore, employers are required to provide adequate time for all workers' at a workplace, from when they start working to when they finish. Employers are also required to provide proper tools, tools with safety features and equipment that has been certified as safe by the manufacturer (Friend & Kohn, 2018). Employees have the right to utilize these tools without risking injury.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, safety at work is an important issue that needs to be addressed by all employers in the USA. Although most employers are concerned with this issue, it is still necessary for them to take extra steps in order to ensure their workers' safety. These steps include inspections as well as implementing a hazard control program. Employers may also have OSHA come onto their property and conduct a health inspection.

In addition, employers are encouraged to have workers wear appropriate safety equipment. This includes safety gloves, safety glasses, safety boots and other devices. These items need to be tested for quality and checked for defects before they are allowed in a workplace (OSHA). Employers can take drastic measures to ensure the health of their employees by having OSHA conduct training. In addition, OSHA also provide topical training for employers on specific issues within a workplace.

There are many ways that employers can reduce hazards that may put their workers' at risk. Some employees may even be injured or become ill from certain tasks or working conditions that should not be permitted in a workplace (Department of Labor). Employers are expected to have safety and health training for their workers so they can provide better training. In addition, OSHA is expected to be a resource that can be accessed by employers and employees to ensure the health and safety of the workforce.

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