

NORA news

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Message From NIOSH

NIOSH has just released the second NORA Update. The Update provides an overview of our progress since we unveiled NORA two years ago. It highlights the successful implementation of NORA and the commitment and diligence of our partnership efforts, including our Partnership Teams. Overall, we have shown increased attention, activities and resources in each of the priority areas, and the creation for the first time of a broad-based network of occupational safety and health partnerships.



Innovations in American Government, an awards program sponsored by the Ford Foundation and administered by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government, recently selected NORA as a semifinalist for the prestigious 1998 Innovations in American Government award. We are pleased that they recognized NORA as a true innovation that combines the creativity, team spirit, and hard work of many people and organizations to advance the prevention of serious occupational injuries and illnesses.

I am delighted that a second NIOSH submission, Control of Asphalt Fumes During Paving, has also been selected as a semifinalist. The asphalt paving initiative combined the teamwork of NIOSH, other government partners, industry, and labor to develop a comprehensive engineering control strategy that reduces exposures to asphalt fumes during paving operations. The broad-based network of partnerships created by NORA, and the attendant change in how our occupational safety and health community is doing business, has helped foster this and other important efforts. The development and implementation of NORA has proven to many in the private sector that collaboration with the government is not only possible but successful.

Once again, we are reminded that NORA truly represents a new and exciting strategy for addressing problems that impose intolerable burdens on workers, business, and society. Moreover, it offers a model for future activities inside and outside NIOSH to protect workers from current and emerging hazards in this time of great change in the workforce and the workplace.



Linda Rosenstock, M.D., M.P.H.
Director



Innovations in American Government Honors NORA and Asphalt Paving Initiatives

Innovations in American Government, an awards program sponsored by the Ford Foundation and administered by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government, selected NORA as a semifinalist for the prestigious 1998 Innovations in American Government award. The 97 total semifinalists include 19 federal semifinalists and 78 state, county, local, and special government semifinalists.

The NIOSH initiative for control of asphalt fumes during paving was also selected as one of the semifinalists (NIOSH had two of the 19 federal semifinalists!). In order to reduce worker exposure to asphalt fumes during paving operations, NIOSH formed a collaborative partnership with government, industry, and labor.

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NORA Liaison Committee Meets in Washington, D.C.

The NORA Liaison Committee held its semiannual meeting in Washington, D.C., in April 1998. Bonnie Rogers (University of North Carolina, American Association of Occupational Health Nurses), NORA Liaison Committee Chair, led the meeting of the committee that consists of members from academia, labor, industry, and professional organizations. The committee has played a critical role in guiding the NORA implementation efforts and has assisted with continued outreach, tracking and measuring progress, and facilitating research in many areas.

Bill Bunn (Navistar International Transportation Corporation), NORA Health Services Research Team member, led a committee discussion on methods to evaluate the implementation of NORA and track its future success. In addition, Nancy Stout (NORA Traumatic Injury Team Leader, NIOSH) and Larry Fine (NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team Leader, NIOSH) presented highlights from successful NORA team activities. Dr. Stout discussed collaborative efforts with three industry partners: Wal-Mart, Browning-Ferris Industries, and BJC Health Systems. Each of these industry partners approached NIOSH to collaborate on topics related to traumatic injury research. Dr. Fine discussed the recent efforts of the NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team toward setting a musculoskeletal disorders research agenda to promote health

and reduce lost work time. The Musculoskeletal Disorders Team held a series of regional meetings to solicit information from an array of partners regarding research needs. They will incorporate the ideas received at the regional meetings into a national research proposal. (See "NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team Examines Ergonomics Issues in Seattle, and Washington, D.C.," page 4.)

Max Lum (NIOSH) discussed NORA communication enhancement programs, which will strengthen existing relationships and improve communications between stakeholders. The enhancement programs include:

- *New NORA exhibit programs*
- *NORA web site*
- *NORA logo*
- *NORA newsletter*
- *NORA compendium of research*
- *Outreach for team partners*
- *Articles for the popular press*
- *1999 NORA conference publication*

The NORA Liaison Committee will meet again in the fall. ■

NORA Liaison Committee Members

Bonnie Rogers (Committee Chair, University of North Carolina, American Association of Occupational Health Nurses) brogers@sph.unc.edu

Robin Baker (*American Public Health Association*)

Jordan Barab (*American Federation of State County Employees and Municipal Employees*)

Thomas F. Bresnahan (*American Society of Safety Engineers*)

Drew Brodtkin (*Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics*)

William B. Bunn (*Navistar International Transportation Corporation*)

Tai Chan (*General Motors Corporation*)

Gwendolyn Keita (*American Psychological Association*)

Sandra Lange (*National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences*)

Tom Leamon (*Liberty Mutual Insurance Company*)

Wayne Lednar (*Eastman Kodak Company*)

Pamela Tau Lee (*Labor Occupational Health Program, University of California at Berkeley*)

Joseph Main (*United Mine Workers of America*)

Franklin Mirer (*United Auto Workers*)

Clifford Mitchell (*American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*)

Carolyn Phillips (*Chemical Manufacturers Association*)

Robert J. Pleasure (*Center to Protect Workers' Rights*)

Beth Resnick (*National Association of County and City Health Officials*)

James C. Rock (*American Industrial Hygiene Association*)

Jane Roemer (*National Safety Council*)

Margaret M. Seminario (*AFL-CIO*)

Frank White (*Organization Resources Counselors, Inc.*)

Partner Perspective: NORA Impact



From:

Bonnie Rogers, Dr.P.H., COHN-S, FAAN, President, American Association of Occupational Health Nurses; Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Chairman, NORA Liaison Committee

The implementation of NORA has resulted in significant efforts to emphasize the importance of occupational health and safety research, the value of research partnerships, and the need to support identified research priorities. The impact of NORA can be far-reaching in that its success can drive occupational health and safety research to ultimately improve worker health.

One impact of interest in the occupational health and safety professional society arena is the establishment in 1998 of the Joint American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN) and the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) Research Award. This award, which will be presented annually at the joint AAOHN and ACOEM conference, recognizes jointly conducted research by collaborative teams of nurses and

physicians to improve the knowledge base in occupational and environmental health. Of highest recommendation is that the research focus be consistent with NORA. This new initiative on the part of both organizations emphasizes the important contributions of interdisciplinary research and demonstrates a clear commitment to NORA, its process, and the need for focused research. Through NORA, a strong opportunity for collaborative partnerships to grow and flourish is fostered, thereby providing linkage that may not have previously existed.

Another point of impact is that AAOHN has recently updated its research priorities, which will be published later this year. These research priorities will be cross-matched with NORA to support funding initiatives through AAOHN's newly established foundation.

What is clear is the significant impact that NORA is having on research development, policy, and funding targets . . . and this is only the beginning. I look forward to the prominence and visibility of NORA in driving and elevating occupational health and safety research – this is truly a partnership in process. ■

NORA as a Model

Several organizations have used or plan to use NORA as a model to develop research agendas.

- *The newly formed Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board has informed NIOSH that it plans to use NORA as a model to involve stakeholders in the development of its research agenda.*
- *The Director of the Italian National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, is planning a priority-setting effort in Italy, using NORA as a model.*
- *The Norwegian National Institute of Occupational Health is conducting a priority-setting process based in part on NORA.*
- *The Environmental Protection Agency is considering using NORA for their Human Health Indoors Project as they explore how the EPA should protect human health indoors in the 21st century.*
- *The state of Washington is undertaking a statewide needs and planning process for health and safety that is much influenced by the NORA process.*
- *The Pacific Northwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center organized a Farm Summit, modeled after NORA, to develop a consensus about key agricultural safety and health problems that research and intervention programs can address. The Center will use the results from the Summit to help shape its priorities. ■*



NIOSH Unveils New NORA Web Site

NIOSH has created a new web site dedicated to NORA and NORA-related activities. *NORA News* and the NORA web site represent the first steps toward creating a comprehensive NORA communication program. The new site can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/norahmpg.html>

Symposium News

Since NORA's creation in 1996, NIOSH and its NORA partners have cosponsored several important scientific meetings on NORA priority areas. As the NORA Implementation Teams continue to focus on their priority areas, NIOSH and its partners will cosponsor additional conferences. Three recent conferences have focused on musculoskeletal disorders, occupational asthma, and occupational latex allergy. (See NORA Upcoming Events on page 6 for more information on future conferences.)

NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team Examines Ergonomics Issues in Seattle and Washington, D.C.

Musculoskeletal disorders are the largest problem facing American workers, costing between \$13 billion and \$20 billion annually. NIOSH held a series of regional meetings to solicit information from an array of partners regarding research needs in an effort to develop a formal national agenda to address musculoskeletal conditions. The Northwest Regional Workshop met in Seattle, Washington, on April 20, and the Eastern Regional Workshop met in Washington, D.C., on April 27 (the Midwest Regional Workshop was held on March 25 in Chicago). The Eastern Regional Workshop focused on ergonomics issues in the health care industry.

At each meeting, the participants began the day in a general session and then divided into separate focus groups to target specific issues of interest. NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team members facilitated the group discussions by asking questions about intervention effectiveness research needs, information and research gaps, surveillance and hazard identification needs, and what fundamental research questions or issues would have the greatest impact on reducing the frequency and severity of musculoskeletal disorders. After a day of discussion, the groups reconvened in a general session to present work group reports and discussed their answers to the questions.

Attendees at the Eastern Regional Workshop held in Washington, D.C.



The NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team will compile the ideas received at the regional meetings and develop a national research proposal that they will circulate to involved stakeholders for comments and finalize with the goal of immediate implementation.

For more information on NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team activities, contact Team Leader Larry Fine, M.D., Dr.P.H., NIOSH, by phone at (513) 841-4428, or by e-mail at ljf4@cdc.gov. The following NIOSH publications provide detailed information on work-related musculoskeletal disorders and ergonomics: *Musculoskeletal Disorders and Workplace Factors: A Critical Review of Epidemiologic Evidence for Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders on the Neck, Upper Extremity, and Low Back* (Publication No. 97-141) and *Elements of Ergonomics Programs: A Primer Based on Evaluations of Musculoskeletal Disorders* (Publication No. 97-117). Proceedings from the 1997 conference, "Ergonomics: Effective Workplace Practices and Programs," are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ecagenda.html>.



Michael Silverstein conducts the Northwest Regional Workshop at a Boeing facility in Seattle.

Occupational Asthma: In and Out of the Workplace

Over the last decade, occupational asthma has emerged as the most prevalent occupational respiratory disease in the United States, resulting in morbidity, disability, diminished productivity, and sometimes death. More than 300 different occupational exposures have been associated with occupational asthma. Additional research in the following areas will help prevent occupational asthma:

- ***Elucidation of mechanisms involved in the development of occupational asthma;***
- ***Identification of risk factors including specific chemicals and occupations involved and the importance of individual susceptibility; and***
- ***Development of more refined methods for medical and environmental surveillance and monitoring.***

NIOSH and the West Virginia University School of Medicine - Office of Continuing Medical Education held an international conference at the new NIOSH research facility in Morgantown, West Virginia, to synthesize recent advances in the basic mechanisms involved in the etiology of occupational asthma and to identify research gaps.

One hundred and eighty-six scientists from five different continents attended the three-day conference entitled "Occupational Asthma: In and Out of the Workplace." The conference marked the first time that investigators gathered to exchange information on the mechanisms of the disease, to identify gaps in knowledge, and to stimulate future investigation in this area of research.

Thirty-four experts from seven countries made presentations on a range of subject matters that included: clinical vs. basic occupational asthma issues; the characteristics of the occupational environment; the genetics of susceptibility to asthma and airway hyperactivity; the immunobiology of occupational asthma; airway inflammation in occupational asthma; the involvement of target tissues in the development of occupational asthma; and critical issues involved in the development of animal models of occupational asthma.

For more information contact NORA Asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Team member Jeffrey Fedan, Ph.D. (NIOSH) at (304) 285-5766, or by E-mail: jf2@cdc.gov.

Natural Rubber Latex Allergy: Recognition, Treatment, and Prevention

NIOSH cosponsored a Food and Drug Law Institute interactive videoconference that focused on the recognition, treatment, and prevention of latex allergies. Natural rubber latex allergy is an emerging public health issue that impacts a wide range of health care and workplace procedures and practices. Allergy to natural rubber latex-containing materials can result in serious health problems.

During the live, interactive broadcast, a panel of internationally recognized experts provided current information on the identification and management of natural rubber latex allergy. The experts also discussed prevention, accommodation, and management issues appropriate for both health care and occupational studies. The panel represented major health care professional organizations, occupational health and safety professionals, and medical/dental device manufacturers. Boris Lushniak from the NORA Allergic and Irritant Dermatitis Team and Edward L. Petsonk from the NORA Asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Team represented NIOSH on the panel of internationally recognized experts.

Other cosponsors of the event included the American Dental Association; American Hospital Association; American Medical Association; American Nurses Association; American Pharmaceutical Association; Royal College of Physicians and Surgeon Canada; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Food and Drug Administration; Food and Drug Law Institute; Health Canada/Bureau of Medical Devices; Health Care Financing Administration; Health Industry Manufacturers Association; NIOSH; Occupational Safety and Health Administration; Public Health Foundation; U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission; Veterans Health Administration.



Order the NORA Update 1998

To order the NORA Update 1998, contact NIOSH at:

1-800-35-NIOSH

(1-800-356-4674)

or visit the NIOSH Homepage at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh>

NORA Upcoming Events

September

September 16-18

Research Workshop on the Risks and Benefits of Exposure to Ultraviolet Radiation and Tanning

National Institutes of Health Campus/Rockville, Md.

Sponsors: National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, NIH; NIOSH; other federal agencies

Contact: Boris Lushniak, NIOSH, (513) 841-4503

Other Upcoming NORA-Related Conferences (Dates TBA)

Workshop on the 1998 Revision of the American Thoracic Respiratory Symptom Questionnaire

In conjunction with the NORA Asthma & Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Team

Functional, Economic, and Social Outcomes of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (Spring 1999)

In conjunction with the NORA Social and Economic Consequences of Work Team and NORA Health Services Research Team

Innovations...

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The partnership developed a comprehensive engineering control technology that reduces exposures to asphalt fumes during paving operations. As a result, as of July 1, 1997, all highway paving machines now have this effective control technology.

Innovations in American Government is one of the most prestigious public-service awards in the country. Started in 1985, Innovations selects award winners based on the originality, effectiveness in addressing important problems, value of services to the clients, and the potential for replication in other jurisdictions. Innovations awards recognize problems and policies that represent original and effective government initiatives. Selected from a pool of more than 1,400 applicants, the semifinalists include programs to improve the quality of education, reduce crime, and protect the environment.

“The Innovations program provides a showcase for outstanding efforts in the public sector,” said Alan Altshuler, director of the program at the Kennedy School. “Government

is called upon to solve complex problems. Again this year, we see fresh examples that demonstrate government’s capacity to address those challenges.”

Past federal recipients of the award include the Food and Drug Administration for a new drug approval process that expedited the availability of effective drugs for HIV, cancer, and cystic fibrosis; the Federal Emergency Management Agency for a new system that provides for quicker prediction of natural disasters and faster emergency response; and the Department of Labor for an innovative partnership with manufacturers and retailers to eradicate sweatshops.

Innovations will announce the 10 winning initiatives on October 22, 1998. Each will receive a \$100,000 award from the Ford Foundation. In addition, 15 remaining finalists will each receive a \$20,000 award. ■

Mark Your Calendar!

**NORA Symposium
May 14, 1999
Washington, D.C.**



*Delivering on the Nation's promise:
Safety and Health at work for all people
through research and prevention*

*For more information on NORA
contact NIOSH at:
1-800-35-NIOSH
(1-800-356-4674)*

*or visit the NIOSH Homepage at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/norahmpg.html>*