

Workwell Blog
World Safety Day
To post April 28, 2021

Recognize World Day for Safety and Health at Work with These Tips

The International Labour Organization (ILO) observed the first [World Day for Safety and Health at Work](#) on April 28, 2003. Since then, the United Nations (UN) and other organizations have embraced April 28 as a day to raise awareness and promote ideas that help create safe and healthy workplaces around the world.

After all, protecting workers isn't (just) about making compliance managers happy. Developing a best-in-class safety culture ensures a more productive workforce and helps to keep your operations running smoothly.

Every day, 865,000 people around the globe die or are injured doing their jobs. That adds up to \$2.8 trillion every year in lost work days, medical treatment, workers' compensation and rehabilitation of occupational injuries and diseases.

Safety in a post-COVID world

Health and safety concerns for workers took a dramatic shift during 2020 with the global COVID-19 pandemic. As companies struggled to adapt workspaces to align with ever-changing recommendations for use of personal protective equipment (PPE), distancing and cleaning, many were forced to reduce on-site shift sizes or even close production facilities entirely. As workers slowly get back to work, ongoing concerns about virus transmission and the steps companies can take to keep workers safe has continued to be important to employees and regulatory officials alike.

As you make accommodations for COVID safety, keep in mind the ongoing need to take precautions to prevent **musculoskeletal disorders (MSD)** – injuries or disorders that affect the body's movement or musculoskeletal system – and other occupational injuries, as well.

According the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), [MSDs are the single largest category of workplace injuries](#) and are responsible for almost 30 percent of all workers' compensation costs.

You'll want to make sure the changes you make to accommodate virus concerns haven't created additional hazards in other areas. Structural or organizational changes can lead to concerns from issues such as higher workloads, intensification or downsizing, working from remote locations or with less supervision. Hiring temporary or contract workers to replace ill or at-risk employees may also create new risks if training isn't completed.

In the United States, a worker is injured on the job every seven seconds. That equates to roughly 510 injuries per hour or 12,600 occupational injuries per day, according to the [National Safety Council](#).

Prevent the most common injuries

On-the-job injuries result from a wide variety of workplace accidents as well as issues such as ill-fitting equipment, improper training or poor worker conditioning. According to the National Safety Council, the most common workplace injuries that lead to missed work are:

- **Sprains, strains and tears** – injuries to muscles, ligaments and tendons often result from twisting, stretching, overuse or overexertion.
- **Chronic pain** – even workers who spend long parts of their day sitting may develop chronic back pain or repetitive motion injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome.
- **Cuts, gashes and punctures** – falls or accidents with equipment can lead to injuries that require immediate care such as bandages or sutures, and when severe can lead to disability.

Beyond these common types of workplace injuries, other frequent injuries include concussions and broken bones from falls and traumatic accidents.

Repetitive motion or repetitive stress while performing job functions can lead to a number of different types of musculoskeletal disorders. These “overuse” injuries may include: carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, tension neck syndrome, rotator cuff tendonitis, epicondylitis, radial tunnel syndrome, trigger finger/thumb, DeQuervain’s Syndrome, degenerative disc disease, and ruptured or herniated disc.

Tip to prevent common injuries

In honor of World Day, consider these tips to help reduce workplace accidents and injuries.

- **Develop functional job descriptions.** Make sure all jobs have up-to-date descriptions that focus on functional requirements not just output quotas.
- **Create ergonomically designed workstations and operations.** Create processes and practices based on preventing injury and minimizing repetitive stress.
- **Develop written safety processes.** Institute a defined system of rights, responsibilities and duties for ensuring safety and reporting injuries or problem areas.
- **Instill a culture of prevention.** Ensure all employees from line workers to supervisors actively participate in creating a safe and healthy environment, are trained in processes and procedures, and participate in keeping workspaces safe.

- **Review the statistics.** Keeping accurate records of injuries is important for OSHA compliance but also can help you ensure you address problem areas over time.
- **Encourage regular breaks.** Making sure your employees take regular breaks reduces the risk of fatigue-related injuries.
- **Create emergency protocols.** Create checklists and drill employees on what to do during emergencies and how to mitigate potential disasters.
- **Make safety gear mandatory.** Regularly inspect the safety gear your team uses and make sure it's in good condition, functional, fits properly and is used correctly.
- **Focus on training.** Ensure new and long-term employees are trained on safe job movements and follow safety procedures.

The key to keeping your workforce health and injury free is to follow industry standards and guidelines from OSHA and workplace safety experts. Conduct regular workplace safety surveys to ensure your processes are sufficient and being used properly. Make compliance with health and safety procedures mandatory for all your employees and promote a workplace culture that encourages personal responsibility.

When your workers are well-trained and aware of workplace safety standards, they will be in a position to identify unsafe conditions, avoid accidents, and respond quickly and correctly if accidents happen. Equally important, make sure every employee feels supported in raising red flags and being proactive in doing their jobs safely.

Create a best-in-class safety culture

Learn more about the role of musculoskeletal health and workplace health and safety.

[Download our free ebook now]