

The case for safer exposure limits

Did you know that most OSHA exposure limits are than 50 years old (most adopted in 1968 from the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH(R)))?

We have learned a lot about noise and chemicals in that time and in most cases, the levels that help protect worker health have shown to be much lower than OSHA limits. So, based on what we know today, your employees may be exposed to levels of noise or chemicals that are legal, but not safe.

SAIF wants to partner with employers, agents, regulators, and employees to protect Oregon workers. One way to do this is to use safer exposure limits along with more effective and reliable controls when hazards can't be eliminated.

What do we mean by a safer exposure limit?

Occupational exposure limits (OELs) are a cornerstone for protecting workers from chemical and physical hazards encountered in the workplace. The primary focus of safer exposure limits is to prevent disease and protect workers from critical health effects of a specific hazard.

Why use safer occupational exposure limits?

Many of the current regulatory exposure limits are based on outdated science. SAIF uses updated health-based exposure limits, which supports our vision to make Oregon the safest place to work. The National Safety Council makes the case that investing in safety makes good sense (bit.ly/3uLwaV3).

Workers' compensation costs have been shown to be three times higher for companies with poor health and safety performance. Illness keeps employees away from the job or prevents them from putting in their top performance. Companies lose more than just the costs of bringing people back to work; they lose the value healthier employees would have created.

People want to work for an employer who cares about their health and safety. If an employee knows they don't have to choose between their health and a paycheck, they are likely to be more loyal and productive.

Promoting employee health and safety provides a competitive advantage, too. Investors rely on performance metrics when making investment decisions. So, when you apply safer exposure limits, you will see a return on investment through lower direct health costs and increased employee engagement.

And when you partner with SAIF to reduce and eliminate health and safety hazards, you'll be more attractive to insurers and should minimize regulatory issues related to exposures.

So, what's the bottom line?

Our understanding of the health effects of workplace hazards continues to evolve with time. Using safer exposure limits and updating how we control workplace hazards to protect employees is essential for business success, and demonstrates safety and health leadership.

If you're wondering how your workplace exposures measure up, SAIF has resources to help. To get started, contact your safety management consultant or our safety team at safety@saif.com. Or call 877.242.5211 or 503.673.5311.

Resources

For more information, including guides on other workplace health and safety topics, visit: saif.com/safety