

# FLORIDA OCCUPATIONAL INJURY AND ILLNESS COALITION QUARTERLY

Inaugural Issue/ December 2016

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the Coalition is to promote and improve the health and safety of Florida's workforce by building partnerships among stakeholders in occupational health, developing strategies for effective outreach and education, and advocating for the implementation of best practices that protect worker health and increase awareness of worksite safety issues.

## WHO WE ARE

The Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) at the Florida Department of Health was established to characterize work-related injuries and illnesses and to use this information to provide information on prevention activities that will improve the health and safety of Florida's workforce.

The OHSP is funded by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which is part of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). As part of the NIOSH grant, the OHSP established the **Florida Occupational Injury and Illness Coalition**. The Coalition is a statewide, voluntary partnership of organizations and individuals committed, through community and state-level actions, to improving the surveillance, prevention, and control of occupational illness and injury in Florida.

Each year the Coalition convenes for a one day conference where representatives from all parts of the State gather for the purpose of networking, building partnerships, and learning about the work of other stakeholders in occupational health and safety. Plans are also underway to hold informal regional meetings in the near future. Additionally, the Coalition hosts periodic webinars on various occupational safety and health issues.

For more information on the Coalition please visit our website at: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/occupational-health-surveillance/index.html>.

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*Florida Works Together Safely!*

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## 2017 ANNUAL COALITION CONFERENCE

In February 2016, the Florida Occupational Injury and Illness Coalition Conference was held in Miami at the impressive facilities of the University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine, Department of Public Health Sciences. The one-day conference provided a great opportunity for coalition members from all over the State to meet in person to discuss and collaborate on timely occupational safety and health issues, as well as present current projects they are involved with.



The Coalition members agreed that, when possible, the annual conference location will be rotated between north, south and central Florida in order to facilitate and encourage statewide participation by occupational safety and health professions. The 2015 conference was held in Tallahassee at the Florida Department of Health.

It's now time to plan for the 2017 conference and we are looking for a Central Florida location! If you have suggestions for presentations at the conference or can provide a meeting space in the Tampa/Orlando area for up to 50 people, please contact Melissa Baniak at [Melissa.Baniak@flhealth.gov](mailto:Melissa.Baniak@flhealth.gov) or (850) 245-4444 x 2819.

## RESEARCH, ARTICLES & COMMENTARIES FROM OUR COLLEAGUES

### Defining and Measuring Near Miss Experiences in Temporary Construction Workforce

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**Affiliations:**<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine, <sup>2</sup>Division of Community Health Promotion, Public Health Research Unit, Florida Department of Health

*Editor's Note: This study was presented by Jordan Stillman and Katerina Santiago at the 2016 Annual American Public Health Association (APHA) Meeting in Denver and won an award for Injury Control.*



The Caban-Martinez Lab at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Division of Environment and Public Health recently completed, as of July 2016, primary data collection on temporary workers in the construction industry. Their two-phased sequential exploratory mixed methods pilot study first collected qualitative data from six focus group discussions with temporary construction workers. These temporary workers were asked to report their experiences with common place near misses (i.e., a close call), injuries, and falls at the jobsite. The goal was to quantify and compare near miss experiences and reporting practices between temporary and payroll workers in the construction industry.

Among all survey respondents “almost being hurt or injured” was selected as the most representative definition of near miss and “slipping on water” was selected as the most common and riskiest near miss scenario. In terms of reporting near misses and injuries, temporary workers are less likely to report a near miss that results in an injury when compared to payroll workers. Findings from this pilot study suggest that temporary workers do not receive adequate orientation, training and tools to accomplish the tasks assigned to them at their worksite, further increasing their risk for injury. Although this study provides the formative work to begin to understand how construction workers think about “near miss” experiences at a construction site and insight into how the temporary worker experience differs from payroll workers, further research within this population is needed.

### Smoking Cessation Lunch Truck Study for Hispanic Workers

**Researchers:** Noella A. Dietz, PhD 1,2, Taghrid Asfar, MD, MSPH 3, Alberto J. Caban-Martinez, DO, PhD, MPH 3, Katerina Santiago, BS 3, Estefania C. Ruano-Herrera, BS 3, Kevin Moore, BS 3, Jordan Sunn Stillman<sup>1</sup>, JD, MS 3, Agnes Poveda, MPA, MCJ 3, Laura McClure, MSPH 2, and David J. Lee, PhD 2,3 **Affiliations:** 1 Broward Health Systems; 2 Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine; 3 Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine; 4 Division of Social & Behavioral Sciences, School of Public Health, University of Memphis

Construction workers experience a disproportionate burden of smoking compared with other occupations in the U.S. Considered a negative behavioral risk factor, smoking causes the greatest morbidity and mortality in the US. The Hispanic workforce has increased in the construction industry dramatically in recent decades. While several interventions have been implemented to support construction workers in smoking cessation, there is little evidence on programs that include cultural factors within the smoking cessation program for Hispanic construction workers.

The Department of Public Health Sciences in the University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine has been funded by the National Cancer Institute to test the feasibility and effectiveness of a culturally-tailored, intervention targeted to Hispanic construction workers (HCW) to be implemented at the construction site. This Study intervention features three phases: in the first and second phase, UM investigators will conduct several focus groups with HCW male smokers and interviews with construction site safety managers, respectively. This data will offer a better understanding of the unique cultural and employment factors influencing this population and institutional attitudes towards worker smoking and smoking cessation efforts. More information about the study can be obtained at: [www.MiamiORG.com](http://www.MiamiORG.com)

## **Should Employers Provide OTC Medicines or Sport Drinks to Employees?**

By Maria Mitchell, Former Manager of Risk Management and Safety, Miami-Dade County

On several occasions, employers have asked me whether they should provide products like pain relievers (e.g., aspirin, ibuprofen) or sport drinks (e.g., Gatorade) to their workers. Often the request for these products has come from an employee safety meeting or employee suggestion program. My response has been, "I don't recommend it." Providing over-the-counter medications, supplements or other ingestible "health" products to employees is risky because, no matter how well intended, these products can have side effects. For example, some pain medications are not appropriate for persons with allergies or clotting disorders. A worker may be unfamiliar with the brand or type of product that the employer provides and have a reaction to that product. Similarly, rather than providing sport drinks for workers in hot environments, the employer should provide plenty of cool water to drink. Sport drinks may contain high salt and sugar levels which could aggravate existing conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes. If workers ask for these products, employers should clearly explain the reason they don't provide them and offer to jointly explore ways that the concerns (e.g., pain, heat) could be addressed.

## **IN THE NEWS**

### **Worker Misclassification: Florida is One of Three Problem States**

The National Safety Council's Kevin Druley reports that there is a growing trend for employers to misclassify workers as independent contractors in order to avoid providing government mandated worker protections, including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirement to provide a safe workplace. (OSHA does not apply to the self-employed.) Further, since misclassifying employers are not paying workers' compensation insurance premiums, they are not concerned about a work injury raising their workers' compensation premiums. Thus, misclassifying employers have little incentive to invest in safety equipment or safety training.

The construction industry has traditionally been the biggest abuser of worker misclassification, however in the past 10 years, misclassification has spread to many other industries. Florida, Texas and North Carolina, are the states where the problem is most prevalent. A March 2015 OSHA and Department of Labor report found that 15.5 percent of construction workers in Florida were affected by worker misclassification. Misclassification also affects the ability to obtain accurate workplace injury rate data because employers don't keep track of injuries of misclassified employees.

### **UF to Receive Nearly \$10 Million for New Agricultural Safety & Health Center**

The University of Florida has received a grant of nearly \$10 million from the CDC through NIOSH for a five-year project to examine the occupational safety and health of workers in agriculture, fishing and forestry in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina.

The new center will conduct research and educational activities designed to promote worker health and safety among Florida's 47,000 farm operators and their families, as well as their employees and contractors. UF is the hosting institution, however, researchers from the University of South Florida, Florida State University, Emory University and Florida A&M University are expected to collaborate on projects related to the region's occupational safety and health needs.

## KEEPING IN TOUCH . . . ANNOUNCEMENTS, EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Florida Section American Industrial Hygiene Association Spring Conference

The dates of the FL-AIHA Spring Conference are 23 to 24 March 2017 at the Tampa Embassy Suites on the campus of the University of South Florida. More information to be available soon at: <http://flaiha.wildapricot.org/>

**Maria Mitchell**, former Manager, Risk Management and Safety, Miami-Dade County, was appointed in October to serve on the leadership team of the National Safety Council's Government and Public Sector Division. The National Safety Council (NSC) has been the nation's leading safety advocate for over 100 years, with the mission to save lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy. The NSC engages businesses, government agencies, elected officials and the public to help prevent injuries and deaths.

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*Florida Works Together Safely!*

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*We want to connect with occupational safety and health professionals!*

*If you would like to submit information for inclusion in the Florida Occupational Injury and Illness Coalition Quarterly, please send an email to our editorial team. (Use "For Coalition Quarterly" as your email subject line.) Please note that the editorial team reserves the right to determine content and to edit all submissions.*

**Join the Coalition!** Call (850) 245-4444 x 2819 or email [Melissa.Baniak@flhealth.gov](mailto:Melissa.Baniak@flhealth.gov)  
for information on joining the Coalition or to subscribe/unsubscribe to our mailing list.