

Lecture Hall

Session Abstracts

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)
72nd Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition

Injury Prevention/Occupational Health

Monday, June 23

1:00 – 1:50pm

The IHS Environmental Health Role in Injury Prevention

LCDR Robert Morones, Western Arizona District Injury Prevention Specialist, USPHS, Phoenix Area Indian Health Service, AZ

Injury is a leading cause of death and disability for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. Overall, unintentional injury is the third leading cause of death among AI/ANs; suicide and homicide are among the top 10 causes of death. As a part of the Division of Environmental Health, Office of Environmental Health and Engineering (OEHE), IHS injury prevention practitioners attempt to address this problem with a comprehensive, evidence-based prevention approach based on proven public health strategies. This session will discuss the four guiding principles that best characterize this approach: proven or best practice community-based prevention strategies, reliable injury surveillance data, building tribal capacity, and fostering collaborative partnerships.

2:00 – 2:50pm

Emerging Health and Safety Issues in Today's Workplace

Michelle Glover-Brown, MPH, RS, Environmental Health & Safety Officer, State University of New York College at Old Westbury, NY

Changes in the nature of work and the workforce are creating a need to expand the scope of occupational health and safety programs designed to improve the workplace. As EHS professionals work towards controlling overt and direct traditional workplace hazards, the health of workers within the workplace will come to the forefront of emerging health & safety issues in the workplace. The health of workers may be the result of less direct work and more non-work related factors such as stress at work and home, difficulties in reconciling work and domestic obligations, hazardous physical and chemical exposures, energy imbalance, obesity, hypertension, smoking, alcohol use, and medications. Additionally, demographic factors, such as the aging of the workforce, immigrant workers, and young workers have an impact on injuries and chronic diseases that can affect the workplace. While understanding the roles of each of the exogenous and endogenous risk factors is important, understanding their total effect may be even extremely important.

EHS professionals must be aware that the overall health of workers is fundamental to public health. This does not mean that efforts to maintain a safe and healthy workplace should be diminished or refocused from controlling workplace hazards; rather, health & safety program management should consider the workplace environment as an optimal venue for health promotion through workplace wellness programs.

3:00 – 3:50pm

Safety with a Capital U—Operation PPE

Cory Frank, EHRT Coordinator, Iowa Dept. of Public Health, IA

How many times have each and every local, State, or federal EH officer had near misses or maybe could have protected themselves better when they were out doing their daily jobs? Creating a "Safety First" culture within environmental health is key to safe environmental health emergency response and protecting staff for "when the big one" hits or when the 1000 year flood happens every 100 years. Looking at a systems approach to this problem and issue has created a new initiative and programming in Iowa to create the atmosphere of everyday safety and its translation to prepared and ready-to-go EH responders. Through the EPHLI and using CDC preparedness funding as a delivery vehicle, this presentation will look at the issue of why don't local EH practitioners in Iowa or abroad have, use or understand the need and use for using PPE as part of their everyday jobs and translate this readiness to the inevitable field responses that are part of EH response and recovery efforts. The presentation will look at prior survey results indicating the lack of basic PPE within Iowa local and State agencies and explore the training program that has followed. The changing of attitudes and mindsets to think about the envelopment of safety programming into EH service training will be explored. Each person in attendance will leave with ideas and insight into how can we duplicate this effort within our own jurisdictions and also fund those efforts.

4:00 – 4:50pm

Public Health Alert: Improper Timing of Amber Intervals Influences Red Light Running, Motor Vehicle Crashes, Severe Injuries, and Death

CAPT Michael Rathsam, MS, REHS, Area Community Injury Prevention Specialist and Emergency Services Deputy Director, Nashville Area IHS, TN

In 1996-1997, a large Northwest City applied for and received approximately \$14.5 thousand dollars from the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) to implement a "Stop Red-Light Running Campaign." Before implementing the campaign, FHA advised that the duration of amber intervals be set according to an Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) standard formula for creating a "Non-Dilemma Zone" at signalized intersections. The City's Transportation Engineer's appeared to ignore FHA's advice as documented amber interval durations consistently failed to meet minimum standards. As a result, motor vehicle crash-related morbidity, mortality, and associated costs *escalated* dramatically during the City's Campaign.

The implication that improperly timed amber intervals increases morbidity and mortality may, or may not, be recognized/understood among City/County Officials, Police Departments, Public Health Professionals, and local Transportation Engineers across this country. However, efforts by City Officials to install "Photo-Red" systems, without properly timing amber intervals and timing maintenance, will likely serve to improve the City's cash flow while needlessly placing their citizens at heightened risk for severe injury (i.e. traumatic brain injury, paraplegia, quadriplegia, and death). Vendors of "Photo-Red" systems commonly receive a percentage of the fines collected for their services so an incentive for insuring proper amber interval timing is likely non-existent.

Judicial Court Systems (Judges, Prosecutors, and Defense Attorneys) that Preside, Prosecute, and Defend citizens accused of "Red-Light Running" with, or without, "Photo Red" systems should be knowledgeable of the dynamic forces that may prevent a lawful motorist from having adequate time to safely react to improperly timed amber intervals.

This study examines, and explains, those forces in a scientific manner while offering a first hand look at how local media became involved and influenced a positive public health outcome.