

# Annual Report

## Nebraska Occupational Safety and Health Program (Fundamental)

July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015



Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health  
Epidemiology and Informatics Unit, Office of Epidemiology

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### **Project Overview**

The aims of the Nebraska Occupational Safety and Health Program (NOSHP) are to collect occupational safety and health data from existing systems; develop a surveillance system for chemical poisonings; expand the Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance (ABLES) program; identify and interact with stakeholders; conduct educational outreach and disseminate information; assemble an occupational health advisory committee and meet yearly; and participate in the occupational health surveillance community.

### **Major Accomplishments, Outputs, and Outcomes**

#### **Generating and Disseminating Occupational Health Indicators**

All of the 21 available Occupational Health Indicators for 2012 were calculated and submitted on-time to NIOSH. A report summarizing the indicator data was produced and disseminated to stakeholders via newsletter and our website. Findings from the report were featured in an article in the Sidney Sun-Telegraph newspaper. We also presented our indicator data and findings to stakeholders at the Nebraska Safety Council annual conference.

*Potential outcome: Sharing occupational health indicator data with the Nebraska public health community, the general public, and NIOSH increases stakeholder knowledge about the status and trends of worker health and safety in Nebraska and in the U.S.*

#### **Enhancing Occupational Health Surveillance through BRFSS**

We worked with the Nebraska DHHS Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Program to include industry and occupation questions on the 2015 survey, which is the fourth survey year with these questions. NOSHP staff attended and presented at BRFSS workgroup meetings to train data users on analyzing and grouping industry and occupation survey responses. Our DHHS Tobacco Free Nebraska Program has used BRFSS occupation data and found smoking prevalence was highest among construction and food preparation workers.

*Potential outcome: Industry and occupation data in BRFSS are being used public health programs in Nebraska DHHS. This work has the potential to shape prevention efforts by allowing programs to identify and target workers in high risk industries and occupations.*

#### **Assessing Injuries and Illnesses in Meatpacking**

We continued our collaboration with UNMC to finish an analysis of work-related injuries and illnesses among meatpacking workers. Using workers' compensation claims data, we found repetitive strain injuries represented 40% of claims, and injury severity was associated with working on the weekend.

Results of the project were summarized in a report and presented to the occupational health community at the Western States Occupational Health Network (WestON) meeting. We also presented the findings to staff at the OSHA Omaha Area Office.

*Potential outcome: Studying workers' compensation claims findings has resulted in the generation of new information on the causes and factors of injuries and illnesses among workers in meatpacking. Disseminating our findings increases stakeholder knowledge of how these injuries and illnesses occur.*

### **Incorporating Occupational Injury Data within Nebraska DHHS Programs**

We worked with the Nebraska DHHS Injury Prevention Program to include occupational injury data in the Injury in Nebraska, 2009-2013 surveillance report. The "Special Supplement: Occupational Injury" section included data on occupational injuries, hospitalizations, and fatalities in Nebraska.

*Intermediate outcome: Inclusion of occupational injury data in other surveillance reports results in an enhanced integration of occupational health and safety into broader public health efforts in our agency.*

### **Disseminating Local Occupational Injury and Illness Data**

We analyzed hospital discharge records and workers' compensation data from 2008-2012 to study differences in occupational injuries and illnesses among local health department (LHD) jurisdictions in Nebraska. A total of 21 "Occupational Health Profiles" that summarize local occupational health data were produced and distributed to LHD directors. Our findings were also presented to local public health professionals at the Public Health Association of Nebraska annual conference.

*Potential outcome: Disseminating local occupational health data increases knowledge and awareness of occupational health and safety trends and can be used by local public health professionals to prioritize occupational injury and illness outreach and interventions.*

### **Responding to Avian Influenza in Nebraska**

NOSHP staff were directly involved in the public health response to highly pathogenic avian influenza in Nebraska among bird populations. We conducted in-person interviews of poultry workers to assess level of exposures and to provide guidance on personal protective equipment use. We also worked with poultry employers, local health departments, and state and federal agencies within Incident Command System to recommend and ensure CDC guidance was implemented.

*Intermediate outcome: Our involvement in the public health response resulted in the development and implementation of protocols for monitoring workers for signs and symptoms, chemoprophylaxis, and worker protection. Our recommendations to employers enhanced adherence to PPE use and reduced poultry worker exposures to the avian influenza virus.*

### **Educating Countertop Workers on Silicosis Hazards**

We redistributed the OSHA/NIOSH Hazard Alert, "Worker Exposure to Silica during Countertop Manufacturing, Finishing, and Installation," to 17,000 contractors in Nebraska. NOSHP staff worked with the Nebraska Department of Labor to email the hazard alert to all contractors registered with the Nebraska Contractor Registry. Several of these contractors work directly in countertop finishing and installation.

*Potential outcome: The hazard alert contains important recommendations to prevent silicosis exposures from stone countertops. If these recommendations are implemented, they will reduce silica exposures among workers in Nebraska.*

### **Building Surveillance Capacity for Pesticide Illnesses and Lead Exposures**

We worked with the Nebraska Regional Poison Center to receive case reports of pesticide illnesses. NOSHP staff participated in the 2015 Winter SENSOR-Pesticides meeting to present program information, provide feedback, and learn best practices for pesticide illness surveillance. Our program also received laboratory reports for worker blood lead tests. We worked with local health departments to provide education and prevention information to workers with elevated lead levels. We also established a new lead exposure referral memorandum of agreement with the OSHA Omaha Area Office.

*Intermediate outcome: Conducting pesticide illness and injury surveillance and adult lead surveillance in Nebraska improves surveillance for the NIOSH SENSOR-Pesticides Program and Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance Program. Our newly established referral agreement with OSHA results in a new partnership to reduce work-related blood lead levels in Nebraska.*

### **Presentations**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>6/7/2015</b>	2015 Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists Annual Conference, Boston, MA.	Occupational Risk Factors among <i>Campylobacter</i> Cases in Nebraska, 2005–2013.
<b>9/12/2014</b>	Western States Occupational Network (WestON) Annual Meeting, Golden, CO.	Meatpacking – Here’s the Beef: Perspectives from the Beef State.
<b>10/7/2014</b>	Nebraska Safety Council Annual Conference, Lincoln, NE.	Putting Data to Work: Workplace Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities in Nebraska.
<b>10/9/2014</b>	Public Health Association of Nebraska (PHAN) Annual Conference, Grand Island, NE.	Work Safety, Work Smart: Occupational Safety and Health in Nebraska.
<b>10/14/2014</b>	Nebraska Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Coalition Meeting. Lincoln, NE.	Pesticide Poisoning in Nebraska.

### **Publications and Reports**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>Dec 2014</b>	21 Data Reports	Local Health Department Occupational Health Profiles
<b>Dec 2014</b>	Data Report	Adult Blood Lead Levels in Nebraska, 2008-2012
<b>Feb 2015</b>	Data Report	Nebraska Occupational Health Indicators Report, 2014
<b>May 2015</b>	Infographic	How Many Workplace Injuries and Illnesses Occur in Nebraska?
<b>Jun 2015</b>	Data Report	Injury in Nebraska, 2009-2013