

INTRODUCTION

Occupational health is an important public health issue in Colorado. Between 2001-2008, an average of 2.4 million workers were employed in Colorado and on average, 120 workers died per year. This accounts for approximately 5 worker deaths for every 100,000 Colorado workers, equating to approximately one Colorado worker fatality every three days. Colorado's occupational landscape encompasses some of the nation's highest risk occupations, including mining, construction, and agriculture. Colorado is also a leader in the development of new and "green" technologies, whose impact on worker health is unknown. Additionally, there is a growing immigrant population that makes up a large part of the highest risk workforce.

As the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Occupational Health Surveillance Program grows, it will continue to collect baseline data and begin to monitor trends so that it can respond to occupational health threats, and prioritizes occupational health issues that are specific to Colorado. Collecting and analyzing data on workplace injuries and illnesses will guide the development of new and safer technologies, educational activities, and policy changes that make Colorado's workplaces healthier

Occupational Health Indicators

In recognition of the need for state-based occupational health surveillance programs, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health developed a standard set of "Occupational Health Indicators" (OHI) that could be used to measure the baseline health of working populations, track occupational health trends over time and compare state data to national data. The Occupational Health Indicators are specific measures of work-related illness, injuries and other factors associated with occupational health that can be generated using state-specific data. The goal of collecting the OHIs is to guide state priorities in workplace injury and illness prevention and intervention. Of the 19 established OHIs,

- 12 report injury and illness resulting from occupational hazards;
- three describe potential workplace health and safety hazards;
- two examine intervention activities;
- one measures harmful exposure in the workplace; and
- one describes the socio-economic impacts of work related injuries and illnesses.

In 2007, the Mountain and Plains Education and Research Center (MAP ERC), in collaboration with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Western Regional Office (NIOSH WRO) and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) completed the baseline assessment report of the Occupational Health Indicators for Colorado for 2001-2005, measuring 14 of the 19 indicators. The overall purpose of this assessment was to provide Colorado with the data and information needed to examine the merits of conducting statewide occupational health surveillance, and to determine priorities for workplace prevention of work-related injuries and illnesses.

Based on the results of this initial assessment, CDPHE initiated a project to continue collecting the indicators for Colorado as the data become available from 2006 forward. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is responsible for completing this project, with support from the Mountain and Plains Education and Research Center, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health –Western States Office, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Division of Workers’ Compensation, the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Control Center, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Region VIII, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and the health department’s Center for Health and Environmental Information and Statistics, Health Facilities & Emergency Medical Services Division, and the Cancer Control Registry.

The data to measure the indicators is derived from a variety of different sources as indicated in the methodology for each indicator; as a result, the source/reference data to calculate each data are available at varying timeframes throughout the year. This report contains all indicator data from at least 2001-2007. 2008 and 2009 data are included for many of the indicators. The most recent data available are included in this report.

With support from the above stakeholders, 17 of the 19 Occupational Health Indicators were calculated, 15 following Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists/National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health guidance, one using Colorado workers’ compensation data rather than the Bureau of Labor Statistics Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII) and one using the Colorado Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance Database rather than NIOSH supported Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance (ABLES) data.

The purpose of collecting the OHIs in Colorado is to describe the baseline health status of workers in Colorado with the target goal of building capacity for occupational health surveillance in Colorado.

Specifically, the goals of this report are to:

1. Collect and compile available data from 2001 to the most recent year for which data are available;
2. Describe the status of worker health in Colorado as outlined in the OHIs;
3. Began to utilize multiple years of data to highlight trends within Colorado;
4. Determine gaps and needs in data, including occupational and demographic characteristics, that may better characterize the occupational health status of Colorado’s working population;
5. Determine additional occupational health data, in addition to the OHIs, that may better define the occupational health status in Colorado;
6. Determine priorities for prevention and workplace intervention efforts; and
7. Recommend future directions for surveillance and prevention activities.

The Indicators presented in this report describe core data to guide the development of programs to prevent work-related injuries and illnesses. The supplemental report is a product of the CDPHE. The initial report is a product of the MAP ERC, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC/NIOSH), grant #5T42OH009229-02. This report represents the views of the authors and should not be considered the official views of the sponsoring agencies or any other institution.

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Methods

Using the CSTE *Occupational Health Indicators: A Guide for Tracking Occupational Health Conditions and Their Determinants*, found at www.cste.org (March 2008 update), a core set of data was abstracted from multiple existing Colorado and national datasets for the years 2001-2008. Exceptions for years are noted in the methods section of each indicator. When appropriate, state and national data are compared. Detailed methods are described in the CSTE/NIOSH guidelines. Each indicator presented in the following pages is described, including the significance of the indicator, specific methods, results, limitations and recommendations.