



Make off-the-job safety a core value in your organization

By Bob Vavra, editor

Workplace safety numbers have improved dramatically during the last 30 years. Total occupational injuries, lost workdays and injuries with lost workdays are all down sharply from 1973 levels, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Workplace fatalities are down to historically low levels.

While the number of American workers rose to just under 139 million in 2003, total workplace deaths, as estimated by the National Safety Council, are 4,500, down from a peak of 5,338 in 1994. The death rate per 100,000 workers is down to 3.2.

Yet 9 out of 10 fatalities and two-thirds of disabling injuries occur to workers off the job. Of the 46,800

worker deaths in 2003, 42,300 occurred off the job – more than half in motor vehicle accidents. Of 9.9 million worker injuries, 6.5 million occurred off the job, including 2.9 million in the home. All of those numbers were improvements from 2002, but the sheer size of the issue is still staggering.

The National Safety Council has undertaken an initiative to call attention to the issue of off-the-job safety. It has been the centerpiece of council President and CEO Alan C. McMillan's public comments since the National Safety Council's 91st Annual Congress & Expo in Chicago in September 2003.

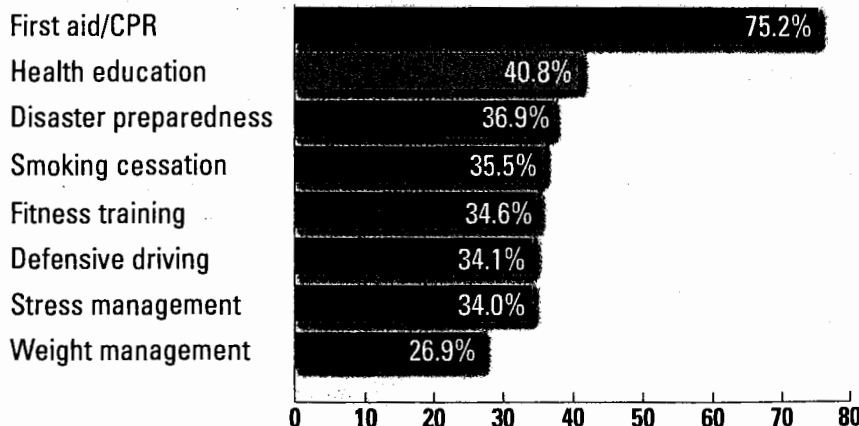
"Occupational safety and health professionals have historically spent most of their time and attention on

the 'work' aspect of that mandate," McMillan said. "For occupational safety professionals, there is a business mandate to become involved in leading injury reductions off the job."

McMillan put the onus squarely on corporations to take a leadership role in extending the decline in workplace injuries and deaths to off-the-job initiatives.

"Many of these risks can be addressed in a similar manner as we address on-the-job injury risks – through education and sharing of best practices and procedures to change behavior," he said. "I urge corporate leaders and safety and health professionals to take action to make their organizations' employees and families better equipped to reduce injuries wherever they may occur."

What safety and health programs do employers offer?



Source: "Off-The-Job Injury Survey," National Safety Council, 2003

Continuing coverage

So what companies make off-the-job safety a core value? What are the strategies that work? What is the measurable impact on the bottom line? That's something *Safety+Health* will examine this year in its continuing coverage of off-the-job safety. We'll look at companies with a track record of excellence in this area and show what works, what needs to happen to make it work, and how companies that implement such programs benefit both their employees and their bottom line.

If you know of a company that should be considered for a profile, send an e-mail to vavrab@nsc.org. **S+H**