



**ALLEN
HOSPITAL**
IOWA HEALTH SYSTEM

Occupational Health



TAKING CARE OF
your
BUSINESS

March 2009

Creating a Healthy Workplace at Work

Exposure to small doses of toxic chemicals may not kill you or make you sick immediately, but the damaging effects of environmental toxins and poisons can accumulate over time and eventually ruin your health. Avoiding sources of toxic substances may allow you to live a longer and have a healthier life.

The Unhealthy Workplace

Unfortunately, many people work in unhealthy environments. It has been estimated that most Americans spend up to 90% of their time indoors, often in synthetic environments filled with chemicals and poor lighting that compromise their health. For example, many of today's furnishings and other office materials contain numerous toxins. The glues used to hold together pressed wood furniture and building materials, adhere laminated surfaces to furniture and keep floors and carpets in place often contain toxic chemicals that can leach into the air over time. Paints, particularly those that are oil-based, can be another source of toxins in the workplace. The toxins emitted from carpets, furniture, and plastics through "offgassing" can create a variety of health problems in anyone exposed to them. Other toxic materials include cleansers (bathroom, kitchen, wall, and carpet), chemicals used in manufacturing processes, perfumes, and pesticides.

Creating a Healthy Workplace

While you may not be able to avoid all the toxic chemicals in your workplace, there are a number of steps you can take throughout the office to *reduce* your exposure to harmful chemicals.

Mandate a smoke-free workplace. Smoke-free policies improve air quality and reduce secondhand smoke exposure. Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces protects nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke. Smoke-free workplace policies are the only effective way to ensure that secondhand smoke exposure does not occur in the workplace. Separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposures of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke.

Work with your office supply distributor to find healthier alternatives to conventional products. These can include everything from non-chlorine-bleached paper (organochlorines are highly hazardous) to non-toxic markers and correction fluid.

Create workplace policies that require non-toxic cleaning supplies be used by janitorial services. Many of the products used to clean contain harmful chemicals such as chlorine bleach, ammonia, petrochemicals, and VOC's. Not only is physical contact with toxic cleaning products a concern, but breathing the fumes of some chemicals, especially over time, can be damaging to your health. In addition, small amounts of residual product can be left on surfaces or in the air following cleaning, adversely affecting air quality.

Upcoming Events

Occupational Hearing Conservationist Course May 14, 15, and 16

Please visit
www.allenocchealth.com
for more information and registration materials.

Training Certification for Drug-Free Workplaces

April 24, 1-3 p.m.

2 hr. Initial Training
\$34/person

Feb 13, 8-9 a.m.

April 17, 1-2 p.m.

1 hr. Annual Non-DOT Update
Training
\$22.00/person

Location:

Medical Staff Classroom at
Gerard Hall, Allen College

To Register visit:

www.allenocchealth.com or email
call Christina Johari at 319-235-
5043

First Aid/CPR Classes

Friday, May 1, 2009

8 a.m. - 1 p.m. First Aid & CPR
Cost \$52.50/person

8 a.m. - 10 a.m. CPR only
Cost \$26.50/person

Location:

Medical Staff Classroom at
Gerard Hall, Allen College

To Register visit:

www.allenocchealth.com or email
call Marlys Nelson at 319-235-
3523.

All registration information for classes can be found on the lower right hand corner of our Allen Occ Health's website home page at www.allenocchealth.com

DID YOU KNOW? HIGH RISK EMPLOYEES COST MORE

- Individuals at high risk for depression have 70.2% higher cost than those at lower risk
- Individuals at high risk for stress have 46.3% higher cost than those at lower risk
- Individuals at high risk for diabetes have 34.8% higher cost than those at lower risk
- Individuals at high risk for weight control issues have 21.4% higher cost than those at lower risk
- Individuals at high risk from past tobacco use have 19.7% higher cost than those at lower risk
- Individuals at high risk from tobacco use have 14.5% higher cost than those at lower risk
- Individuals at high risk for blood pressure have 11.7% higher cost than those at lower risk
- Individuals at high risk for lack of exercise have 10.4% higher cost than those at lower risk

Source: Goetzel et al 1998

Due to these shocking statistics, many organizations are creating wellness programs and administering Health Risk Assessments to better understand the issues that are directly affecting their employees. Interventions could be health seminars, wellness screenings, health fairs and displays, to something as simple as taking a look at what is offered in your break room vending machines.

For more information on what Allen Occupational Health can do to assist your company, call Natalie Kracht at 319-266-3842 ext. 302.

"Creating A Healthy Workforce", Continued from page 1

When renovating or building new, be sure to pay attention to:

- *Building Materials*
- *Carpets and Flooring*
- *Cleaners*
- *Lighting Design*
- *Employee Workstation Comfort*
- *Electro-magnetic Fields*
- *Furnishings*
- *Heating, Cooling, and Ventilation*
- *Quality Lawn Care and Landscaping*
- *Office Supplies*
- *Paints and Wallcoverings*
- *Pest Control*
- *Radon*
- *Stress*
- *Water Quality*

Taking the time to choose the least toxic alternative when renovating or building new can significantly impact chemical exposure in the workplace.

By carrying out these simple steps, you can create a healthier office, improve employee morale, and save money for your company.

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STRICTLY BUSINESS GOES GREEN

Mark your calendar to come visit our booth at this year's annual business expo, Strictly Business, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. The event will be held on Tuesday, April 7 at Park Place Event Centre from 4-7 p.m. A seminar is scheduled beginning at 3:00, and the theme for this year's event is "Go Green - It's a Walk in the Park."

Come to the seminar to ask our "green experts" how to save the planet at your home and business. The panel includes: Daniel Channer, StruXture Architects; Galen Howsare, Hawkeye Community College; Mike Massina, MidAmerican Energy; and Pete Olson, Cedar Falls Utilities.

Allen Occupational Health's booth will showcase the health benefits of "Going Green" at work! You won't want to miss out on our tips, gifts and useful advise. It is also an opportunity to meet our staff and join in some fun.

Hope to see you there!