

Real-time Data Access Prompts Chemical Exposure Investigations

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH), Occupational Health Unit, utilizes Poison Control call center data to identify and investigate cases of uncontrolled chemical exposures in workplaces.

The Challenge

Licensed health care professionals in Connecticut are required by law to report cases of work-related illness or injury to CT DPH within 48 hours of diagnosis, however they rarely do. In 2009, the Connecticut Poison Control Center (CPCC) received an average of two calls per day related to uncontrolled workplace chemical exposures. Although CPCC has trained medical staff who respond to the clinical aspects of these incidents, neither CPCC nor any other agency has been tasked with investigating the underlying control failures in the workplace that led to these exposures. As such, several hundred chemical over-exposures known each year to the CPCC represented a missed opportunity for preventing similar exposures in the future.



The Response

Beginning in 2011, CT DPH partnered with the CPCC to gain remote real-time access to CPCC's Toxicall[®] database to identify cases of uncontrolled workplace chemical releases. The case reports not only provide information about the exposed worker and the health effects resulting from the chemical exposure, but also often contain information on the chemical agent(s) involved, the nature and severity of the chemical release, other individuals who may have been exposed, and emergency response and hospitalizations.

The Impact

To date, 79 cases were identified as meeting the CT DPH's investigation protocol, and 44 (56%) interventions or on-site assessments have been completed. To maintain uniformity in tracking exposure outcomes, the protocol limits investigations to exposure cases confirmed by medical personnel. These investigations resulted not only in recommendations for preventing future exposures in the workplace originally reported to CPCC, but also led to several referrals that allowed control recommendations to be shared with other similar workplaces.

For more information, visit: <http://www.ct.gov/dph/occupationalhealth>

"Thank you for the detailed assessment and report you provided. You touched on some very good points that we will be addressing over the next few weeks. I found the assessment helpful and I am glad that we were able to work together."
Facilities Manager for a Metals Manufacturer who received an on-site assessment.