

OSHA Referral Program for Serious Injuries

Our state occupational surveillance program developed a referral program to improve occupational surveillance and public health practice by strategically linking surveillance, work practices and enforcement activities. The goal of the referral program is to provide OSHA with real-time surveillance data on non-fatal and fatal injuries for unprogrammed inspections to abate hazardous working conditions associated with recurring serious injuries at individual worksites.

The Challenge

OSHA plays an integral role in occupational surveillance as the primary enforcement agency that collects and utilizes surveillance data to ensure that employers abate hazards in the workplace. There remains a need for implementing new technologies and data systems to inform programmed enforcement activities instead of relying solely on employer and employee reporting of hazards and adverse health outcomes. There are numerous occupational surveillance data systems that are unavailable to OSHA which can be leveraged to enhance occupational surveillance and enforcement activities.



The Response

We developed and are continually expanding data system infrastructure through coordination with OSHA, our state surveillance program, public health departments, clinics and other public health stakeholders in Illinois. The data integrates multiple data sources and allows our research team to identify serious injuries and illnesses in near real-time and to rapidly assess emerging hazards.

"The referral program is a successful demonstration of the immediate impact active surveillance can have on mitigating workplace hazards."

-Lee Friedman, IOSP at UIC

The Impact

Since initiating the program two years ago, we have expanded to include all five federal OSHA offices and our state OSHA program. In the past 12 months, we submitted 108 referrals to federal OSHA and 20 referrals to our state OSHA for enforcement investigations. Nearly all the referrals have resulted in violations with mandated abatement relating to forklifts, barrier guards, lockout/tagout, machine safeguards, mechanical power transmission apparatus and recordkeeping. To complement enforcement activities, we are working with OSHA non-enforcement consultation programs to reach out to companies with high injury rates to assist them with improving workplace safety. Our program also began working with the Illinois Department of Labor which licenses temporary staffing agencies to assist in identifying staffing agencies that are violating wage and hour rules or failing to train their temporary employment personnel for high-risk jobs.

For more information, visit <https://illinoisinjuryprevention.uic.edu/> **or contact the Illinois Occupational Surveillance Program, University of Illinois Chicago, Lee Friedman, lfried1@uic.edu.**