

Partnerships to Improve Community Occupational Health

The Wisconsin Occupational Health Surveillance Program (OH Program) focuses on surveillance and prevention of occupational injury, illness and fatality. Wisconsin Public Health has a strong network of county and city public health agencies responsible for community health, as well as many supportive community groups and schools with public health interests.

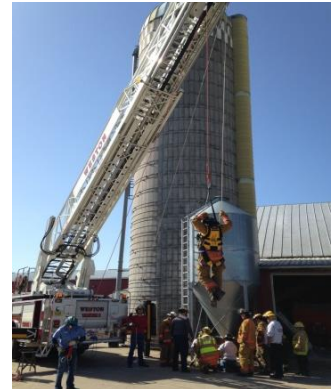
The Challenge

Although statutes in Wisconsin require public health issues to be addressed at the local level, there is a chronic lack of fiscal resources and personnel expertise to effectively promote occupational health in local and tribal county health departments (LHDs) and community-based organizations.

The Response

In Wisconsin, small seed grants to LHDs have proven an effective strategy to focus local capacity building. During 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, the Wisconsin OH Program initiated a competitive small grant process (up to \$8,500 each) for Wisconsin LHDs and non-profit organizations to implement community-based occupational health and safety interventions supported by local surveillance data and addressing community priorities with a high likelihood of sustainability beyond the funding period.

During 2013-2014, sixteen applications were received and nine were funded by the OH Program. Funded projects included: training for farmers and first responders on farm accidents involving machinery and chemicals; community needs assessments related to occupational injury prevention and management; agricultural safety outreach and education; targeted education, health screenings and injury analysis, including one project targeting dairy farm workers; working with large employers to incorporate occupational health into workplace wellness programs; and a comprehensive radon survey of a university campus. During 2014-2015, the OH Program funded two continuation projects, Northcentral Technical College and University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, which had occupational health components focused on agricultural safety.



Northcentral Technical College's training for farmers and first responders (elevated silo rescue)

The Impact

This small grants process has increased the Wisconsin OH Program's collaboration and engagement with local organizations throughout the state (e.g., health departments, colleges/universities and community-based groups). It has been gratifying to see community interest mobilized to address occupational injury and disease prevention and the innovative approaches used to build occupational health components into existing programs. Expansion of the chronic disease workplace wellness activities to include occupational health and safety has been especially noteworthy.

For more information, visit: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/occupational-health/index.htm