

SAFETY SENSE

Getting A Safer Workplace Is No Accident

(NAPSA)—A growing number of people are examining what it takes to have a safer workplace. Fortunately for workers and employers everywhere, they are coming up with some good ideas.

A private industry workplace accident or illness occurs every six seconds in the United States. In 1999 alone, there were 5.3 million on-the-job injuries reported, which translates to billions and billions of dollars in medical costs and workers' compensation claims. And it's American industry and you, the taxpayer who end up footing the bill.

Experts contend that more people die at unsafe workplaces every year than are killed by prostate and breast cancer combined.

While these terrible cancers have rightly sparked nationwide crusades, workplace injuries and deaths have so far escaped the notice of most of the public, the press, and the nation's political leaders. Until that changes, the toll will continue to rise.

The social impact of workplace accidents isn't just about numbers and data. Workplace accidents and deaths happen to people...to someone's son or daughter, husband or wife, mom or dad, brother or sister. Every mishap affects both the worker and the worker's family. So what prevents workplace safety from becoming a priority?

Part of the problem is that accidents are often seen as random acts. Many corporations view



A growing number of workers and employers are making workplace safety a priority.

workplace accidents as one of the inevitable costs of doing business. But in addition to that, Americans don't have workplace safety on their top-of-mind list of concerns because the very organizations that have the biggest stake in the issue can't agree on how best to protect workers.

Business, labor, advocacy groups, trade associations, and academic institutions all have a different take on how to make and keep the workplace safer.

The key to addressing this is bringing this diverse group together to look for ways to work in concert with one another.

That's how creative ideas and workable solutions are born. That's starting to happen, and it's the first step to lowering the staggering human and financial costs of workplace deaths and accidents.