

## Total Worker Health – a new approach for well-being at work

On average, employed US adults spend more than half of their waking lives working or engaging in work-related activities ([BLS, 2018](#)). “The time spent at the workplace, the tasks performed there, and the work environment all affect overall health.” says the [US Surgeon General](#). That’s why worker well-being is relevant for workers and employers, and why Total Worker Health® can be a key strategy for advancing worker well-being.

### WHAT IS TOTAL WORKER HEALTH®?

Total Worker Health (TWH) is a new and developing program concept that takes occupational safety and health to the next level to also address other workforce health concerns such as stress, chronic diseases, and working and living well into older age. Scientific evidence now supports what many safety and health professionals, as well as workers themselves, have long suspected—that risk factors in the workplace can contribute to health problems previously considered unrelated to work ([NIOSH, 2018](#)). For example, there are work-related risk factors for sleep disorders, cardiovascular disease, depression, obesity, and other health conditions. Likewise, our work has a large impact on how we maintain our health. This is why TWH programs focus on making working conditions conducive to health, which can lead to health benefits on and off the job.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) launched the Total Worker Health Program in 2011 as an evolution of the NIOSH Steps to a Healthier U.S. Workforce and the NIOSH Work Life Initiatives. Keeping workers safe is the foundation upon which a TWH approach is built. TWH *integrates* workplace safety efforts with a broad spectrum of opportunities and interventions to improve overall worker health and well-being.

### Examples of a Total Worker Health approach to workplace safety

- Respiratory illnesses from poor workplace air quality can be more serious for workers who are smokers. A TWH program deals with air quality AND smoking cessation.
- Job stress increases the risk factors for heart disease such as high blood pressure and smoking and low physical activity. Job stress also contributes to anxiety/depression. A TWH program reduces job work-related stressors AND offers exercise, diet, stress management.

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- Physically demanding work can lead to feeling too fatigued to exercise or to prepare healthy meals. A TWH program addresses equipment to reduce bodily forces AND work schedules that allow for rest and recovery.

### WHAT IS NOT TOTAL WORKER HEALTH®?

Just as important as defining Total Worker Health, it is equally important to stress what TWH is not ([NIOSH](#)). TWH approaches are not the same as health promotion programs or newer employee “wellness programs.” Here are some clarifying examples:

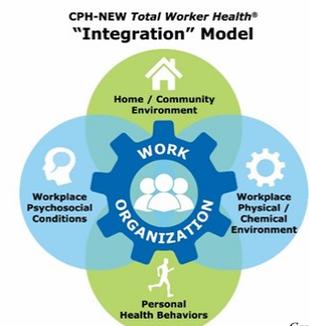
- TWH is not a “wellness program” that has been implemented without simultaneously providing safe and healthful working conditions.
- TWH is not a collection of health promotion efforts at a workplace where the very way that work is organized and structured is contributing to worker injuries and illnesses.
- TWH is not consistent with workplace policies that discriminate against or penalize workers for their individual health conditions or create disincentives for improving health.

Rather, the TWH approach recommends that employers and workers collaborate to design safe and healthy workplaces that support all workers, regardless of individual or legal differences (e.g., employees vs. contractors, temporary workers or contingent workers), in both their professional and personal health goals.

### AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Total Worker Health is a concept that recognizes that our overall safety, health, and well-being is influenced by several environmental and behavioral factors (Figure 1). Work organization, or the way that work processes or tasks are arranged (represented by the circular gear in Fig 1), can have a profound impact on worker well-being by touching upon all of these factors. For example, a worker on the third shift may find it hard to access healthy food because the cafeteria is closed during their work hours. This same worker may also find it hard to participate in exercise classes at the local gym, since they are all scheduled when the worker sleeps. A TWH approach to workplace well-being focuses on making work organization and the working environment conducive to health. Healthy work can set the stage for worker safety, health and well-being on and off the job.

**Figure 1:** Total Worker Health: an integrated model of workplace safety, health, and well-being.



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Worker well-being is affected by factors such as the workplace physical/chemical environment, the psychosocial conditions in the workplace, the home/community environment, and personal health behaviors. The way that work is organized can affect all of these factors.

## **SIMPLE WAYS TO GET STARTED WITH TOTAL WORKER HEALTH**

NIOSH outlines five defining elements that are [fundamental](#) for a Total Worker Health program. Your organization can begin adopting these elements by taking a few simple steps from the ideas outlined below.

**TWH Principle 1:** Demonstrate leadership commitment to worker safety and health at all levels of the organization.

- Provide training to supervisors and managers on how to support worker safety and well being.
- Develop a “Human Centered Culture” built on trust, not fear. Encourage active worker participation, input, and involvement.

**TWH Principle 2:** Design work to eliminate or reduce safety and health hazards and promote well-being.

- Re-organize work to minimize repetitive motion, excessive force, and awkward postures.
- Plan shift schedules that allow workers to have sufficient sleep quality and quantity.

**TWH Principle 3:** Promote and support worker engagement throughout program design and implementation.

- Involve front line-employees in assessing concerns; empower employees to solve problems;
- Get employee feedback on workplace changes before rolling them out.

**TWH Principle 4:** Ensure confidentiality and privacy of workers.

- Avoid workplace policies that discriminate against or penalize workers for their individual health conditions.

**TWH Principle 5:** Integrate relevant systems to advance worker well-being.

- Encourage coordinated goal-setting and cooperation between health and safety, wellness, benefits, training, and employee assistance programs.

### **Case study – a real estate firm uses TWH principles to combat job stress in maintenance workers**

**The setting:** A family-owned real-estate property management firm; 60 maintenance technicians spread across 28 apartment communities in Greater Boston and Rhode Island.

**The problem:** Maintenance workers expressed high levels of job stress; low participation in company-sponsored stress management programs.

**How TWH principles were used:** [Principle 3: Worker engagement]

Workers and supervisors (separately) participated in focus groups to identify stressors that could influence safety, health and job satisfaction. The main stressors related to communication and management of work orders – e.g. conflicting work order priorities, decentralized assignment of work orders, high volume, unnecessary work orders. A “design team” of maintenance technicians was organized to recommend solutions.

**A TWH solution:** [Principle 2: Design work to promote health, reduce stress]

The company implemented a multi-pronged solution using ideas generated by the technicians. These solutions would improve communication and relations with office staff and renters, and lead to more job satisfaction and well-being. Examples of stress-reducing work improvements implemented:

1. Consistently use the company’s work order software to manage all work orders.
2. Cross train office staff to provide quick answers to simple maintenance questions.
3. Improve communication systems with technicians to reduced duplication and missed calls.
4. Increase recognition and feedback of workers for good performance to enhance job satisfaction.

## **LEARN MORE ABOUT TOTAL WORKER HEALTH**

The NIOSH TWH website provides a wide array of resources on this topic ([www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh)). NIOSH funded six “[Centers of Excellence](#)” for Total Worker Health to serve as hubs of TWH-related research and education activities. Connecticut is home to the Center for Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace (CPH-NEW), which is based jointly at the University of Connecticut (Farmington and Storrs campuses) and the University of Massachusetts Lowell ([www.uml.edu/cphnew](http://www.uml.edu/cphnew)). In addition to research, CPH-NEW also provides professional education to workplace safety and health professionals and assist employers with information about implementing a TWH program. Contact [CPH-NEW@uml.edu](mailto:CPH-NEW@uml.edu) or visit [www.uml.edu/cphnew](http://www.uml.edu/cphnew).

## **RESOURCES CORNER**

### **Employer resources from selected TWH Centers for Excellence**

[Healthy Workplace Participatory Program Toolkit](#) – a participatory Total Worker Health Program

TWH [Toolbox talks](#) and [Health Impacts Safety](#) – Info sheets and safety meeting guides for safety leaders

TWH [videos](#) and [podcasts](#) – Experts and small business industry leaders share their expertise, tips, and experiences on important topics related to TWH.

[Workplace Integrated Safety and Health \(WISH\) Assessment](#) – organization level survey tool to measure policies, programs, practices related to safety, health and well-being.

[News & Views](#) TWH Emerging Topics series. Stay connected. Learn about new topics, training opportunities, and webinars by signing up for [CPH-NEW’s mailing list](#) and [NIOSH’s TWH newsletter](#).

### **TWH Professional development opportunities**

TWH [“On-demand” education](#) and TWH [degree or certification programs](#)

TWH presentations at [Safety Professional Conferences](#)

# Protecting Workers from 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Understandably, workers and employers are concerned about the evolving coronavirus outbreak first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The information below provides links to interim guidance and other resources for preventing exposures to, and infections with, 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). The US Department of Labor/OSHA has a webpage and will continue to update its [2019 Novel Coronavirus webpage](#) as more information emerges.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the virus has resulted in confirmed human infections in China, including cases outside Wuhan City. Additional cases have been identified in a growing number of other [international locations](#), including [the United States](#).

There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with 2019-nCoV as the outbreak investigation continues. Based on how other similar viruses spread, infected people may be able to spread the 2019-nCoV through their respiratory secretions, especially when they cough or sneeze. Previous outbreaks of coronavirus have been associated with spread from ill people to others through close contact, such as caring for or living with an infected person. There is currently no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV infection.

There is no evidence of ongoing transmission of 2019-nCoV in the United States at this time. Without sustained human-to-human transmission, most American workers are not at significant risk of infection. However, workers involved in healthcare (including clinical laboratory personnel), airline operations (including cabin crewmembers) and border protection may have exposure to travelers infected with the virus in China or other affected areas. Business travelers from the United States who

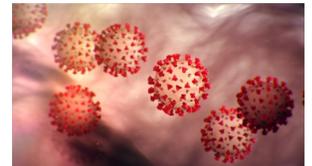
visit areas abroad where the virus is spreading may also be at some risk of exposure.

The following websites can be consulted to protect workers in some of these higher risk occupations from exposure to 2019-nCoV.

**Healthcare workers:** Until more is known about how the 2019-nCoV spreads, CDC and OSHA recommend using a combination of precautions:

[standard precautions for all patient care](#)  
[contact precautions](#) and  
[airborne precautions](#)

Precautions which also includes wearing gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 or better respirators, and eye/face protection to protect workers with exposure to the virus. For additional information, consult: the [CDC](#) or the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) webpages for interim guidance on infection prevention and control recommendations for patients with known or patients under investigation for 2019-nCoV in a Healthcare Setting.



**Clinical laboratory workers:** Consult the [CDC](#)'s webpage for interim laboratory biosafety guidelines for handling specimens associated with 2019-nCoV infection.

**Airline Workers:** Consult [OSHA](#)'s webpage for airline worker infection prevention and control recommendations.

For more information, contact Anne Bracker (860) 263-6920 or Ken Tucker (860) 263-6929 at CONN-OSHA

## It's flu season; taking these simple precautions can help prevent the spread all respiratory viruses including the 2019-nCoV

- Stay home when you are sick. If you have flu-like symptoms, and in particular fever, don't go to work.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue or your upper sleeve. Through the tissue into the trash
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

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## ***OSHA Injury and Illness Reporting and Recording announcement***

### ***Reminder: Post your OSHA 300A– Summary of Work Related injuries and Illnesses: February 1 thru April 30.***

**March 2, 2020, is the deadline** for electronically reporting your OSHA Form 300A data for calendar year 2019. Collection began January 2, 2020.

***\*NEW for 2019 reporting\**** The collection of CY 2019 data and beyond will include the collection of establishments' Employer Identification Numbers (EIN).

**Remember, not all establishments need to submit their OSHA 300A Data.** Only a small fraction of *private sector employer* establishments are required to electronically submit their Form 300A data to OSHA. Establishments that meet *any* of the following criteria **DO NOT** have to send their information to us. Remember, these criteria apply at the establish-

ment level, not to the firm as a whole. These exemptions ***do not*** apply to Connecticut Public Sector Employers.

- The establishment's peak employment during the previous calendar year was 19 or fewer, regardless of the establishment's industry.
- The establishment's industry regardless of the size is on the [Non-Mandatory Appendix A to Subpart B -- Partially Exempt Industries](#)

The establishments that had a peak employment between 20 and 249 employees during the previous calendar year *AND* the establishment's NAICS code is [on this list](#), must submit injury and illness summary (Form 300A) data to OSHA electronically. The list may be found @ <https://www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/NAICScodesforelectronicsubmission.html>

## ***CONN-OSHA~ Training Update...***

**OSHA Recordkeeping March 12, 2020 from 9:00 a.m. to noon** This interactive session will make you knowledgeable of the rules and ensure confidence that you have properly recorded and reported occupational injuries and illnesses, including how to fill out the OSHA 300 Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses accurately and correctly.

**Workzone Safety April 9, 2020, from 10:00a.m. to noon** Basic guidelines for work zone traffic control and the requirements of Part VI of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) with particular emphasis on short term work sites on roads and streets in rural and small urban areas will be presented.

**Workplace Violence April 15, 2020, from 10:00 a.m. to noon** This workshop is designed to make you more aware of some of the issues related to the workplace and to provide tools to help manage, defuse and prevent it.

**Powered Industrial Trucks April 23, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to noon** This two hour workshop includes the basic requirements of the OSHA 29 CFR 1910.178 Powered Industrial Truck Standard which affects both General Industry and Construction material handling operations.

**Fall Protection May 5, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to noon** Falls are among the most common causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. During this training we will examine best practices for elimination or controlling hazards associated with walking and working surfaces in the workplace.

**Trenching & Excavation June 18, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to noon** This workshop will provide an overview of 29 CFR 1926.650-652 excavations, including the role of the competent person. The session is designed to assist participants in identifying hazards associated with excavations and related activities.

**Breakfast Roundtable** This discussion group meets the third Tuesday of every month from 8:15 am to 9:45 am. Pre-registration is required. Visit our web page for more information: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/osha/Breakfast/index.htm> To be placed on the e-mail distribution list, contact John Able at [John.able@ct.gov](mailto:John.able@ct.gov)

Classes are free and are held at 200 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield, CT in Conference Room A/B (unless otherwise noted). To register, contact Catherine Zinsser at [catherine.zinsser@ct.gov](mailto:catherine.zinsser@ct.gov) Pre-registration is required. A Photo I.D. is also required to allow entry into a public building. For more training information, visit the CONN-OSHA web site [www.ConnOsha.com](http://www.ConnOsha.com)