

TOOLBOX TALK #15

MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

Age-specific efforts aimed at preventing musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) related to overexertion – a significant cause of MSDs among construction workers in the United States – could help address the problem, researchers from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) say.

The researchers led a study that looked at 10 years of data from workers compensation claims for construction employees in Ohio. The state is the most populous of the four that have exclusively state-run workers' comp systems (the others were North Dakota, Washington and Wyoming). The researchers note that Ohio insures around 2/3 of the state's workers and only employers with 500 or more workers can self-insure in the state.



Results show that although the prevalence of claims was greatest among 35-44 age group, the average claim was more costly and resulted in more days away from work among those 45-64.

Differences between age groups in the rate and severity of specific work-related musculoskeletal disorder types might be communicated to workers and their supervisors to help them focus on the most important risks, the researchers wrote.

Other potential measures: promoting the use of ergonomic tools and equipment, modifying tasks, and providing training in safe work practices.

Citing a previous study conducted by the Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR), the researchers note that, in 2015, 37% of work-related MSDs occurred because of overexertion while pushing, pulling, holding, carrying and catching materials, while around 30% were caused by overexertion from lowering and/or lifting materials.