



NEWSLETTER

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OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH WEEK IN NORTH AMERICA

North America celebrates Occupational Safety and Health Week

Every year, tens of thousands of workers are killed on the job, and hundreds of thousands are injured at work. Other workers will eventually suffer and succumb to chronic occupational illnesses, many while still in the prime of their lives. While governments, industry and organized labour have worked diligently to reduce or eliminate occupational fatalities, injuries and illnesses, a lot more needs to be done. We can start by raising the awareness about workplace health and safety among employers, employees and communities.

During **May 1-7, 2011**, persons, organizations and communities across the U.S. and Canada and with partners in Mexico will be celebrating [North American Occupational Safety and Health \(NAOSH\) Week](#). This year, there are two additional significant landmark events. The U.S. [Occupational Safety and Health Agency \(OSHA\)](#) is celebrating its 40th Anniversary. The [American Society of Safety Engineers \(ASSE\)](#) is celebrating its 100th Anniversary.

NAOSH Week was first launched in June 1997, marked by an agreement between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Week (COHS) had been observed by the [Canadian Society of Safety Engineering \(CSSE\)](#) for ten years previously (1986-1996). During the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) talks between the three countries, workplace safety within the boundaries of all three nations was discussed by their governments' labour department representatives. Canada's representative at these talks was familiar with the Canadian COHS Week, and suggested to his Mexican and American counterparts that their countries might wish to become involved in a similar endeavour. Thus the birth of NAOSH Week.

During NAOSH Week, joined by the CSSE, OSHA's Alliance Program participants and the [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's \(FMCSA\)](#) Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Belt Partnership, the ASSE and its members will sponsor events large and small aimed at spreading the word about being safe at work.¹

The NAOSH 2011 theme is ***'Celebrating a Century of Safety'***. The goal is to focus employers, employees, partners and the public on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace, at home and in the community.

The NAOSH Week Logo

The NAOSH Week logo pictured below — three hands forming an equilateral triangle — portrays the three participating nations — Canada, the United States and Mexico — and symbolizes joint venture, cooperation and the commitment to the common goals shared by all occupational health and safety

¹ *American Society of Safety Engineers, OSHA, to focus on past, future of work safety during NAOSH Week - May 1-7, 2011: ASSE, News Release, March 2011*

"Healthier organizations mean more productive employees."

partners. The logo's three sides stand for the partnership by the three countries in this joint occupational health and safety venture, as well as all tripartite partnerships between business, labour and governments. The connected hands illustrate assistance and cooperation on many levels - from interpersonal relationships in the workplace to international exchange.



What NAOSH Week means to your organization

By recognizing NAOSH Week, organizations are promoting the importance of their occupational health and safety policies and programs to their employees and communities. No organization can be deemed to be healthy without an effective health and safety program in place. “**Safety First**” is not just a nice slogan, but must be an integral and fundamental part of a healthy organization. There are a number of activities that employers can undertake to annually promote NAOSH Week and its objectives. Such activities or events include:

- ☞ Holding information sessions for managers and staff about the organization’s health and safety policies and program objectives.
- ☞ Raising the awareness of the role and contribution of safety and health professionals.
- ☞ Increasing the understanding of the benefits of investment in occupational health and safety.
- ☞ Presenting awards of recognition/appreciation to persons or groups who have significantly contributed to the organization’s occupational health and safety goals over the course of the last year.
- ☞ Highlighting and advertising upcoming workplace health and safety training and available external courses.
- ☞ Distributing posters and information provided by the [NAOSH Web Site](#), OSHA, the ASSE and the CSSE, American states and Canadian provinces/territories.
- ☞ Supporting NAOSH Week community-based events, especially in local schools.

Forty years for the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA)

*April 28, 2011 marks the 40th anniversary of OSHA’s first day on the job - a job that has delivered remarkable progress for our nation. Workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths have fallen dramatically since OSHA began.*² - Dr. David Michaels

As in Canada, occupational health and safety legislation in the U.S. really came into its own during the late sixties and early seventies. Forty years ago, Congress responded to the public's demand for safer workplaces and passed the [Occupational Safety and Health Act](#). The need was clear. Far too many workers were getting killed or seriously injured on the job. The legislation created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and charged the new agency with setting and enforcing standards to protect working men and women in America. By law, it is the responsibility of employers to ensure that workplaces are safe and free of recognized hazards. It is OSHA's job to ensure that this happens.

² A Special Message from the Assistant Secretary of OSHA: April 2011 <http://www.osha.gov/osha40/letter.html>
“Healthier organizations mean more productive employees.”

Despite being a small agency with fewer enforcement tools as strong as those of other regulatory agencies, OSHA's Assistant Secretary recognized that the Agency has had a huge, positive impact on the country. Fatality and injury rates dropped markedly since OSHA began in 1971. Enforcement of OSHA's standards for asbestos, benzene, lead, bloodborne pathogens and other health hazards has prevented countless cases of work-related disease. Dedicated OSHA staff has done excellent work, even during periods of stagnant budgets and political leadership that didn't value strong regulation.³

Together with the states, OSHA has tackled deadly safety risks and serious health hazards. The Agency established common sense standards and cooperative programs that saved thousands of lives and prevented countless injuries. However, while OSHA and occupational health and safety laws have contributed to reducing the number of work-related fatalities, injuries and illnesses, there are still new challenges and emerging issues for regulators. New hazards have emerged in recent years as a result of modern-day technologies (e.g. robotics, informatics, nanotechnology, green technologies, etc.) and a rapidly changing labour market. It is these new risks that will require OSHA's immediate attention.

New challenges and directions for OSHA

In July 2010, OSHA Assistant Secretary David Michaels announced the following new strategies for the Agency:⁴

- ☞ Provide stronger enforcement: some employers need incentives to do the right thing
- ☞ Ensure workers have a voice
- ☞ Refocus and strengthen OSHA's compliance assistance programs
- ☞ Change workplace culture: employers must "find and fix" workplace hazards
- ☞ Develop innovative approaches to addressing new (and old) hazards
- ☞ Improve Intra-Agency collaboration
- ☞ Improve and modernize workplace injury and illness tracking: strengthen agency's focus on accurate recordkeeping
- ☞ Strengthen OSHA's use of science
- ☞ Strengthen state OSHA plans
- ☞ Conduct Agency's work with transparency, openness, integrity and humility



The American Society of Safety Engineers

100 years and counting

Founded in 1911 in Des Plaines, Illinois, the ASSE is the oldest professional safety organization. Its more than 33,000 members manage, supervise and consult on safety, health, and environmental issues in industry, insurance, government and education. It is guided by a 16-member Board of Directors. The society has 17 practice specialties, 151 chapters, 28 sections and 58 student sections.

Recommended Web Sites:

- ◆ NAOSH Week Website - American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE): <http://www.asse.org/newsroom/naosh11/>
- ◆ NAOSH Week Website - Canadian Society of Safety Engineers (CSSE) http://csse.org/naosh_week/naosh_week.htm
- ◆ North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week.: <http://www.naosh.org/english/>
- ◆ U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration: <http://www.osha.gov/index.html>
- ◆ Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL): http://www.caall-acalo.org/home_eng.shtml

³ OSHA at Forty: *New Challenges and New Directions*: Assistant Secretary David Michaels, OSHA, July 19, 2010

⁴ Ibid:

"Healthier organizations mean more productive employees."