

Oregon's Workplace Health and Safety: Looking Forward to 2020

Lunch Workgroup # 2 - Lifestyle, non-traditional work schedules, and work restructuring

Discussion Question: In the next decade how will changes in lifestyles, work restructuring, and changing work schedules affect the workplace?

Lifestyles and Health

- Party lifestyle with young workers, too much drug and alcohol use, not enough sleep (in the manufacturing industry)
- There is less access to medical providers by choice or lack of insurance. There is an increase in Internet based self-diagnosing, self-prescribing, reading about nutrients and medications, and people can be unknowingly harmed by self-remedies. Illicit drug use is important, but what about somebody who has over-medicated on an OTC drug? There is so much access to information that people are often implementing their own plans.
- Stress is apparent in the workforce, and the highest unnecessary expenditure is overuse of anti-depressants. Work stress, home stress, financial stress all contribute.
- People are trying to pay attention to health and exercise, but people aren't always physically fit and often begin exercising too much too soon then getting injured, which affects workplace performance. There is a need for help to obtain information on starting a new health regimen. It would be useful to have this information available in the workplace.
- We're seeing increases in marital issues, domestic violence, and relationship issues manifested in the workplace. This leads to security concerns in the workplace.
- Barriers to workplace wellness: What if a company allows employees to exercise and they get hurt... there is increased risk exposure for the company. How does a business deal with giving the employees time to do something for their own good on the company's dime without increasing cost/risk for company? We need to know more about what companies can get in ROI for investment in health promotion.
- Participation in healthy at work groups is declining because they're not done on work time because employees are overloaded, working too much, and can't afford to take time out of their schedules.

- How do you restructure work to be productive while still addressing lifestyle issues, family issues, and stress that people have? How can we describe these issues as a benefit for a company rather than a burden?

Work Restructuring

- When people retire, work is being spread across existing workers instead of replacing; more work to do in the same amount of time results in tired employees. Companies will be reluctant to make new hires until they're confident in the economic turnaround.
- There has been a drastic increase in number of people who are telecommuting in past five years. OSHA does not have jurisdiction over people's homes, how does this impact work injuries. How do you classify between domestic and workplace injuries? [Response from OSHA employee:] Federal OSHA regulations – OSHA does have jurisdiction over homes, but companies have little control over the setup, inspections aren't practical, and the employer often doesn't see home area. Some companies have agreements with telecommuters in place to try and enforce a safe work environment at home.
- Mobile communications devices have exploded so quickly – we haven't moved the desk into the car, but we're close. Companies have an expectation that employees are always immediately available and will answer phone calls while driving, placing employees at risk. Supervisors should call and immediately ask 'Are you driving?' and if the employee says yes, ask them to pull over and call back.
- People don't really take vacations anymore if they have a Blackberry unless they're in a non-service area. People don't want to be overwhelmed with emails when they return, so they check it on their Blackberry and don't really get a break. If you have a mobile communication device there's an expectation that... why do you have it if you're not going to use it 24/7? Where does the workday end, where does exposure to work hazards end, and what are the implications for injuries resulting from these devices?
- Companies try to suck up as much personal time as possible, but are mad when the employee uses work time for personal purposes. They expect me to answer a business call late at night, but I can't text my friend at work? This blurring impacts lifestyle and relationships outside of work, also impacts productivity at work.
- Changes in non-office shift work that are happening or might be coming: Manufacturing – there are trends towards flattening the organizational chart, removing some of the management positions, and having more self-directed work on the manufacturing floor.

- The younger work force does not always want to work overtime, and they have more important priorities in their lives than older generations. Younger employees deny overtime because they value work-life balance.
- The young work force takes longer to make decisions. They often text and social network to feel confident and secure in their decisions before they make them.
- The younger workforce likes the 12-hour work shift, but this does not carry over into older ages. It's difficult to coordinate different scheduling desires of different age groups.

Shift Work and Non-traditional Work Schedules

- Performance is worse when employees are tired – almost like being legally drunk on the job. A person's ability to self-diagnose this is poor, they always 'feel fine', but can really be impaired.
- When you're on a business call with somebody in India, one of you has to be up in the middle of the night.
- Global time zone changes touch all industries, even if it's not your company it could be your buyer, your supplier, technical support, etc. that isn't in your time zone and the it will still affect you. Even government jobs in Utah have switched to 4 10-hour days, so even in similar time zones you might not have similar work schedules. Some companies operate during different work times to reduce energy costs.
- Road maintenance and construction has started to shift to a night industry so they don't interrupt the flow of traffic and the flow of commerce. They have taken a 24-hour focus.
- Police and public safety – we see distinct performance issues for those who are day shift vs. graveyard. We're not seeing flexibility or creativity to add safety measures to those types of shift work, and collective bargaining doesn't focus on shift work. It seems like violence is more prevalent at night, which can be a safety issue for these workers.
- In nursing, people work a 12-hour shift and then are begged to work another 6-8 hour shift right afterwards. Similar issues exist in other public sectors like firefighters and police.
- Long work shifts make it more dangerous for leisure activities when people work 48 hours on and then try to go mountain biking, hunting, etc.

- Health standpoint – there is more obesity, disease in non-traditional shift workers. Related to increased breast cancer prevalence among flight attendants.
- Often people in non-traditional work schedules need to make rapid decisions under high pressure, and the work environment and long hours are not conducive to this.

Four biggest issues:

1. Work life balance – **blurring of lines between home life and work life** due to the 24/7 economy and the explosion of technology that makes people available almost all the time.

2. There are health and safety **impacts from companies trying to get more production out of workers** for less money, adding hours, longer shifts, working overtime.

3. There is an **increase in health conditions** of people entering the workforce, a lack of physical conditioning, and earlier onset of disease.

4. There are **barriers to health and safety initiatives** in the workplace. How can we show companies that there is an ROI, or at least not a decrease in productivity for spending company time and money on health and safety programs? How can companies minimize the financial risk involved with letting employees exercise during work hours (e.g. on the job injuries)?

There is an overarching theme of generational differences between younger and older workers in lifestyle, work restructuring, and shift work.