

NBSIA Member Services Safety Bulletin

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STRATEGIES FOR AN AGING WORKFORCE

Aging affects a variety of health conditions and can cause chronic health issues; however, support in the workplace and at home can help employees live longer, more productive lives.

Benefits of Older Employees

Older workers usually have more wisdom, experience and may possess more productive work habits. They report lower levels of stress on the job, and in general, they get along better with their coworkers.

Older workers tend to experience fewer workplace injuries. This may be because of experience gathered from years in the workplace, or because of increased caution and awareness of physical limitations. When accidents involving older workers do occur, they require more time to heal. ***This emphasizes the need*** for employers to adapt work conditions to protect workers.



Arthritis, hypertension and diabetes are the most common health conditions affecting older workers.

Simple Tips for an Age-Friendly Work Environment

Here are some strategies for a healthier, safer and more age-friendly workforce:

- Prioritize workplace flexibility. *To the extent possible*, give workers a say in their schedule, work conditions, work organization, and tasks.
- Match tasks to abilities. Use self-paced work, self-directed rest breaks and less repetitive tasks.
- Avoid prolonged, sedentary work which is bad for workers of every age. Consider sit/stand workstations for workers who traditionally sit all day.
- Manage hazards: including noise, slip/trip hazards, and other physical hazards.

- Design ergonomic workspaces by inspecting and updating workstations, tools, floor surfaces, adjustable seating and lighting.

By 2015, one-in-five American workers will be over 65 and in 2020, one-in-four will be over 55.

(According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.)

- Utilize team strategies. Workers closest to the problem are often best equipped to find the fix.
- Provide health promotion and lifestyle interventions including physical activity, healthy meal options, tobacco cessation assistance, and health related coaching.
- Help older employees adapt to new technologies.
- Proactively manage reasonable accommodations and the return-to-work process after illness or injury absences.
- Focus on the most effective way to manage a multi-generational workplace.



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Keep a copy of this bulletin in your Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) binder and be sure employees receive a copy.