

Getting Health & Safety Right: Economics & Creativity

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Getting health and safety (HS) right in industry today takes business sense, scientific know-how and some creativity. The average back injury costs about \$40,000. If a manufactured product unit has a \$10 profit, a company must manufacture 4,000 units to pay for that one accident. If the unit requires 15 min to process, then 1,000 hr are utilized creating product to pay for that one accident. If a good lifting program is part of the HS program, then perhaps the injury can be avoided and the 1,000 hr are utilized to create \$40,000 of profit. The average cost of an emergency shower is about \$500. If there is no significant risk of chemical splash, then 50 product units and about 12.5 hr of manufacturing time are wasted by installing the shower. While HS programs are a vital part of responsible manufacturing and protecting human resources, they should be viewed with a reasonable amount of business sense to ensure value. Creativity is also important. Management and labor issues are often central in HS. Topics such as profit, staffing, qualitative assessment, employee participation, regulatory compliance, and return on investment should be considered for HS programs—just as they are in the design of a product.

Paper not available for publication.

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