Risk Insights

Provided by: MST Insurance Solutions, Inc.

5 Workplace Safety Trends to Watch in 2025

Keeping employees safe on the job and minimizing the risk of related accidents and injuries are top priorities within any organization, regardless of size or sector. While certain elements of occupational safety remain constant, others may change and evolve over time. As such, it's essential for employers to stay on top of the latest workplace safety trends and adjust their risk management strategies accordingly.

Several factors have been influencing the occupational safety landscape this year, including advances in technology, rising mental health concerns, ongoing remote work challenges, a growing connection between sustainability and safety, and shifting corporate culture expectations. This article provides more information on these trends and offers guidance to help employers properly navigate such developments.

1. Utilizing Technology to Bolster Safety

The past decade has seen a rapid expansion in workplace technology, motivating many employers to incorporate new digital solutions within their operations. As it pertains to occupational safety, artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) tools have become increasingly popular.

For example, some employers are leveraging wearable technology equipped with AI capabilities—including smart helmets, glasses, watches and exoskeletons—to continuously monitor their staff and identify potential safety concerns in real time. This technology uses advanced sensors and cameras to track and analyze a range of data, namely employees' immediate surroundings, vital signs and their specific movements during physically demanding tasks (e.g., lifting heavy boxes). Through predetermined algorithms, such

technology can help employers ensure prompt detection and remediation of various hazards, ergonomic issues and indicators of overexertion or fatigue, thereby preventing potential accidents and injuries.

In addition to wearable technology, some employers are updating their safety training programs with VR solutions. These tools allow employers to simulate different workplace scenarios with customizable settings, giving their staff the opportunity to practice responding to possible hazards and emergencies in controlled and protected environments. Such tools can also help employees review and rehearse safety protocols for particularly complex job tasks, reducing the risk of errors through hands-on experience. Altogether, VR solutions can create more immersive and, in turn, effective safety training programs.

This technology will likely only continue to improve, providing greater benefits along the way. With this in mind, employers should strongly consider implementing AI-equipped wearable technology and VR training solutions (if they haven't already). To ensure the successful integration of this technology within

their existing occupational safety programs and larger operations, employers may need to consult trusted IT professionals. Employers will need to get their staff on board with such technology by highlighting its advantages and offering detailed guidance on proper usage.

2.   Prioritizing Mental Health

In recent years, it has become more evident that poor mental health among employees—especially when caused by job-related stressors, heavy workloads or a lack of appreciation from management—is capable of creating occupational safety concerns in the same way that physical hazards can. According to the National Safety Council, instances of both moderate and severe mental health distress (e.g., excess stress, anxiety and depression) have been linked to a greater risk of workplace accidents and injuries. This is likely because employees facing mental health concerns are often less focused, engaged and aware of potential safety hazards, resulting in poor decision-making and unnecessary risk-taking.

Considering these findings, it's clear that employers need to consciously protect their employees' mental health by fostering a working environment that makes them feel supported in their overall well-being and comfortable voicing any issues regarding their psychological safety on the job. They can do so by conducting regular check-ins with employees to discuss their workloads and stress levels, training management on how to recognize and respond to signs of mental health distress among staff, and introducing dedicated well-being initiatives and resources for those in need (e.g., stress management programs and allotted mental health days in company leave policies).

3.   Protecting Remote Workers

The proportion of remote workers surged during the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, some employees have gradually returned to the office, but a considerable share either continue to work from home full-time or utilize hybrid arrangements. Over the years, this trend has posed new occupational safety challenges, making it more difficult for employers to monitor remote employees' working habits and ensure they uphold proper ergonomics.

For instance, remote employees may be more likely to take on larger workloads and longer, nontraditional schedules due to their constant digitized access to job materials. This could make them more vulnerable to digital eyestrain from extended screen time and increase the risk of occupational stress and fatigue, posing significant safety concerns.

Additionally, remote employees are often less inclined to utilize adequate workstations, resorting to sitting in unsupportive chairs or on the couch for the majority of their shifts. Such nonergonomic setups can cause these employees to hold uncomfortable postures for long periods of time, contributing to a host of musculoskeletal problems, including chronic back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis.

To better protect these employees, it's imperative for employers to include proper safety measures in their remote work policies. These measures may include requiring employees to follow traditional schedules or establishing maximum daily working hours, training staff on ergonomic best practices and encouraging them to maintain appropriate workstations (e.g., a supportive chair, a desk with sturdy legs and a flat surface, monitors placed at eye level, and a keyboard setup that permits relaxed shoulder and wrist positioning). If possible, employers should consider allocating a percentage of occupational safety program funding toward remote employees' workstations. In some municipalities, this may even be required by law. Employers should consult legal counsel to determine their specific compliance needs.

4.   Promoting Safety Through Sustainability

As stakeholders, regulators and the public continue to hold organizations more accountable for their environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices, many employers are connecting sustainability and occupational safety. Specifically, employers who neglect to address the environmental impacts of their operations (e.g., carbon emissions, pollution and hazardous waste) could leave their staff susceptible to lasting health issues, including respiratory problems, neurological conditions, certain cancers and cardiovascular disease.

In light of these concerns, employers simply can't afford to ignore sustainability in their occupational safety programs. By regularly reviewing their ESG practices and adjusting them as needed to reflect current environmental developments and regulations, employers can keep stakeholders satisfied while cultivating a healthier workforce. Key sustainability initiatives for them to consider include switching to energy-efficient machinery, tools and technology; leveraging water and air filtration systems that limit both indoor and outdoor pollution; implementing effective waste management protocols; using personal protective equipment made from recyclable or otherwise eco-friendly materials; and taking steps to neutralize carbon emissions generated by their operations.

5.   Adopting a Culture of Safety

Over the last few years, a growing number of employers have shed the harmful misconceptions that occupational safety programs are only necessary for certain industries or specific departments within an organization and that their sole benefit is injury prevention. Instead, most employers now recognize that successful organizations must promote safety in every aspect of their operations and that doing so comes with a series of advantages, including boosted staff morale, increased stakeholder trust and loyalty, higher productivity and efficiency levels, greater cost savings and bolstered regulatory compliance.

In 2025 and beyond, employers should make it a priority to establish a culture of safety, ensuring corporate leaders and management are actively involved in promoting injury prevention and encouraging their employees to be diligent in recognizing and responding to occupational hazards. For employees to buy into a workplace safety culture, they need to be engaged. Employers can foster increased engagement among their staff by scheduling regular safety meetings, posting plenty of safety signage on-site and offering a range of written resources (e.g., workplace safety manuals and flyers). What's more, employers should reward employees who demonstrate a commitment to injury prevention. Although these efforts may require some initial investments, they will prove well worth the cost over time.

Conclusion

Various occupational safety trends have emerged this year. Staying informed on these changes, implementing new safety solutions, and taking steps to protect their employees against both existing and developing hazards can make all the difference in helping employers maintain successful operations.

Contact us today for more occupational safety updates and risk management guidance.