

Ontario's Occupational Disease Action Plan:

Aligning the provincial health and safety system towards occupational disease prevention

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on behalf of the **Occupational Disease Action Plan Implementation Team**

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INTRODUCTION

- Occupational disease (OD) is common and results from exposure to chemical, biological and physical agents in the workplace
- In 2016 there were 60 compensated traumatic fatalities compared to 161 compensated OD fatalities in the province of Ontario
- Many work-related illnesses and deaths go unrecognized and/or unreported
- Occupational health and safety, generally, has tended to focus on physical safety and musculoskeletal issues with less attention on OD

OBJECTIVE

To describe a collaborative approach to improve OD prevention that is being implemented in Ontario, Canada with the participation and cooperation of the Occupational Health and Safety System and additional healthcare partners

ONTARIO CONTEXT

- Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) System comprises the following organizations:
 - Ministry of Labour (MOL)
 - Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)
 - Six health and safety associations that provide support to workplaces and workers for prevention (IHSA, PSHSA, WSN, WSPS, OHCOW, WHSC)
 - Four specialty research centres (CREOD, CREMSD, OCRC, IWH)

SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE ACTION PLAN (ODAP)

- In April 2016, Ontario's OHS System recognized the need to increase the focus on occupational disease prevention and initiated an Occupational Disease Action Plan (ODAP)
- The MOL held a meeting of experts to present research and knowledge on OD; this group recommended:
 - Ensuring new and emerging risks are included
 - Strengthening surveillance systems to inform prevention efforts
 - Focusing on occupational exposures that lead to disease, rather than diseases alone
 - A short list of 10 exposures/diseases that should be considered as possible priorities for the ODAP

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE ACTION PLAN (ODAP) FORMAL PLAN

The goal of ODAP is to align the OHS System's efforts on OD prevention, specifically prevention of hazardous exposures and reduction of OD burden in Ontario workplaces

- In June 2016 an ODAP Working Group was formally created including representatives from all OHS System partners as well as Public Health Ontario (PHO) and The Lung Association (TLA)
- As there was a need to further prioritize areas of focus; a ranking process was undertaken using the expert group's list of 10 exposures/diseases as well as any additional recommendations from the working group
- The complete list was prioritized (Table 1) based on:
 - Prevalence or need for prevention
 - Significance or potential for impact
 - Opportunity to leverage other prevention activities in the province
- In 2017 the ODAP Implementation Team was formally created with five working groups corresponding to the selected priority areas:
 - Noise
 - Allergens and irritants (lung and skin)
 - Diesel engine exhaust (cancer)
 - Intelligence and decision support
 - Getting occupational histories into the electronic medical record
- Additionally, the improvement of general OD awareness was adopted as a full OHS System priority for 2017 and 2018
- Emerging issues were also maintained as a secondary priority; a provincial Nanotechnology and Health Network has since been initiated by OHS System partners
- Activities and impacts for each working group for 2017 and 2018 are shown on the right

Table 1. Exposures ranked by the ODAP Working Group

Exposures Considered	Rank
Noise	1
Allergens/Irritants	2
Diesel Engine Exhaust	3
Asbestos	4
Silica	5
Solar	6
Organic Solvents	7
Heat	8
Shift Work	9
Nanotechnology	10
Radiation	11
Radon	12

OVERALL IMPACT AND NEXT STEPS

- ODAP activities have increased provincial interest in occupational exposures and OD, including initiatives to improve data assets, develop a provincial OD surveillance program and the proposal of new OELs (e.g., diesel engine exhaust)
- Priorities will be revisited annually, with the potential for the addition and/or removal of priorities or working groups; for 2018-2019, the priorities have remained the same

ORGANIZATIONS' ACRONYMS

CREMSD - Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders; CREOD - Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease; IHSA - Infrastructure Health and Safety Association; IWH - Institute for Work and Health; MOL - Ministry of Labour; OCRC - Occupational Cancer Research Centre; OHCOW - Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc.; PHO - Public Health Ontario; PSHSA - Public Services Health and Safety Association; TLA - The Lung Association; WHSC - Workers Health and Safety Centre; WSIB - Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; WSN - Workplace Safety North; WSPS - Workplace Safety and Prevention Services

Activities of the ODAP Working Groups for 2017 and 2018

Noise

- Developed and promoted key messaging about noise at work through awareness campaigns aligned with events such as International Noise Awareness Day, reaching more than 127,000 people
- Presented a series of three educational webinars promoting (1) Ontario's new Noise Regulation, (2) hazards of noise and (3) control measures, with attendance of more than 350 people
- Raised the profile of noise through various initiatives including conferences seminars and the #PreventNoise wordmark (Figure 1)

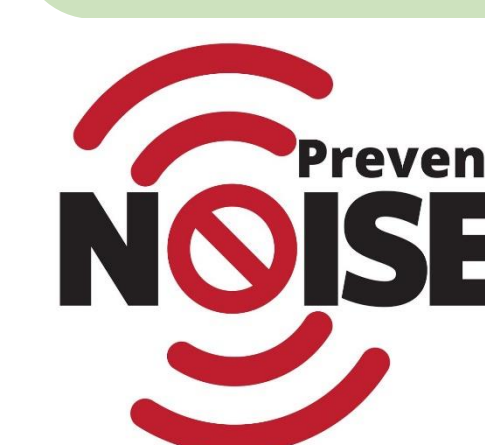


Figure 1. #PreventNoise wordmark designed by the Noise Working Group

Allergen and Irritants

- Conducted a review of research and knowledge as well as an inventory of provincial resources
- Undertook a priority setting exercise for allergens and irritants relevant to the skin and lungs
- Result is a focus on the following exposures:
 - Cleaning agents (lung irritant)
 - Isocyanates (lung sensitizer)
 - Preservatives (skin sensitizer)
 - Wet work (skin irritant)
- Next steps: identify gaps in resources and training as well as continued research and surveillance

Diesel Engine Exhaust

- Hosted a national webinar in collaboration with CAREX Canada that had over 150 attendees and is now available on CAREX Canada's website
- Developed a Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) training module available on the WSN website
- Developed infographics and educational materials that are available on the OCRC and WSN websites

Intelligence and Decision Support

- Inventoried existing data resources and activities relevant to occupational exposure and disease surveillance in Ontario
- Supported the successful application for the Occupational Disease Surveillance Program, jointly funded by the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- Currently undertaking an analysis of detailed WSIB data for OD claims and exploring the use of laboratory test data for exposure surveillance

Electronic Medical Record (EMR)

- Engaged with OntarioMD, the organization responsible for EMR implementation in Ontario
- Undertaking a series of studies to assess the feasibility of, and barriers/facilitators to, completing an occupational history in the clinical setting

