

## Worker Health Surveillance for New Mexico and the New Mexico Occupational Health Registry



In 2002 the New Mexico Department of Health (NM DOH) was funded by National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) for a project to track worker illness and injury. The Department of Health and University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center (UNM/HSC) have formed a partnership to conduct the project, titled “Development of Worker Health Surveillance for New Mexico,” (OH-02-007), which is housed at UNM.

### *What we do*

- Our project conducts surveillance of occupational illness and injury for New Mexico workers. We do this by collecting, compiling and analyzing data from several existing sources, forming collaborations with health and regulatory agencies, and providing education on illness and injury in the workplace. Changes to the New Mexico Administrative Code in 2003 made the NMOHR the agency responsible for operating a statewide registry of occupational illnesses and injuries.

### *Why*

- Nationally, employers reported 6.3 million work injuries and 515,000 cases of occupational illnesses in 1994 [NIOSH 1996]. That same year, occupational injuries alone cost \$121 billion in lost wages and lost productivity, administrative expenses, health care, and other costs. This figure does not include the costs of occupational diseases. An estimated 860,000 illnesses and 60,300 deaths from workplace exposures occur annually in the United States [Leigh 1997].

### *What we know so far:*

1. New Mexico has a high rate of work-related deaths compared to other states and the United States as a whole. In recent years, the rate of on-the-job fatalities has dropped in the US from 4.6 deaths per 100,000 workers in 1998 to 4.0. New Mexico is not seeing the same decline. Our fatality rate in the same time period ranged from 4.4 per 100,000 in 2000 to 7.6 per 100,000 workers in 2002.
2. Silicosis, a lung disease from dust exposure, is a problem for the health of New Mexico workers but asbestosis rates are lower than for other states. Two New Mexico counties with long histories of mining, San Juan and Grant, have some of the highest rates of silicosis in the nation (San Juan 14.5, Grant 26.0/1,000,000 population aged 15 and over for the years 1985-1999, age adjusted rates [NIOSH 2003]).
3. New Mexico’s workers are less likely to be covered under the state workers’ compensation program, are less likely to be insured [americansforhealthcare.org], and have lower average wages than do other states.

4. The rate of New Mexicans employed in industries at high risk for work-related injury fatality, such as farming and mining, is higher than in US overall. The four top industries for occupational fatalities in New Mexico are mining, agriculture, construction, and transportation.

*Reports:*

- July 2004 New Mexico Epidemiology Report **Occupational Health Surveillance in New Mexico: Highlights from the CSTE Indicators Project**
- **Occupational Health Indicators: Results from 13 States for 2000** (CSTE - coming 2005)
- 2002 New Mexico Selected Health Statistics Supplement **Occupational Injury Fatalities in New Mexico 1998-2002**

*Upcoming projects:*

- Occupational Health Needs Assessment Among Native Americans in New Mexico
- Partnerships for worker pesticide illness and injury surveillance

*NMOHR authority:*

- New Mexico Administrative Code 7.4.3.

*How to report a work-related illness or injury (for physicians/clinicians only)*

- NMOHR Brochure (PDF)
- NMOHR Reporting form (PDF)

NIOSH. 1996. Cincinnati, OH: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication. No.96-115 (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora.html>).

Leigh JP, Markowitz SB, Fahs M, Landrigan PJ. 1997. Occupational injury and illness in the United States. Estimates of costs, morbidity, and mortality. Arch Intern Med; 157:1557-68.

NIOSH. 2003. Work-related lung disease surveillance report 2003. DHHS (NIOSH) Pub. No. 2003-111. Cincinnati, OH.

<http://www.americansforhealthcare.org/docUploads/New%20Mexico%2Epdf>