

SURVEY OF US STATES FOR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES, 2003



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Survey of US States for Occupational Health Surveillance Activities, 2003

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Executive Summary:

We performed a brief survey to identify the occupational health surveillance systems currently operating in the United States. Sixteen states reported that they do little to no occupational health surveillance. Two hundred fifty surveillance systems were identified in 30 states. The surveillance systems operating in the greatest number of states (i.e. fatalities and lead exposure) are supported by federal funding through the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The primary impediments to conducting occupational health surveillance were staffing and funding problems. Lack of technical expertise did not appear to be a critical issue in most states (according to the state epidemiologist). States that conducted occupational surveillance were more likely to have perceived access to data sources such as vital statistics, workers compensation, and BLS data than those without occupational health surveillance activities. States would like to develop surveillance systems for work-related musculoskeletal disorders (9 states) and agricultural injuries and illnesses (7 states). Some state epidemiologists failed to identify occupational health surveillance programs known to be operating within their states. This 'oversight' likely reflects poor communication within and between state agencies.