

Why a Healthy Work Force is Important

NASA is committed to the safety and quality of life of employees on the ground, in the air, and in space. No longer is it acceptable to focus attention primarily on health care expenditures and discount employee well being and a long-term commitment to risk prevention at home and at work. NASA will first consider the safety and prevention of impairment of the work force. Consequently, preventive health care costs are viewed as health care investments.

Reducing the health risks of NASA employees leads to a more committed and effective work force. A more productive work force provides NASA and this nation with a greater competitive edge when carrying out NASA's mission. Potential health risks facing the NASA population include: poor lifestyle habits such as inadequate nutrition, insufficient exercise and smoking; hazardous environmental exposures in the workplace, at home or during leisure; and inadequate medical monitoring and preventive screening for disease. Such poor lifestyle habits may not only contribute to compromised performance and safety in the workplace but can also lead to early disability and death from cardiovascular disease, cancer, lung disease, diabetes, and of course accidents and on the job injuries. **The undetected and unrecognized errors caused by a compromised physical and mental state are the greatest threats to safety that we face!**

Healthy employees are the pillars of NASA's success and can get the job done better and more efficiently. An investment in healthy lifestyle improvement is an investment in NASA's future, and is one of the most significant competitive advantages available today.

Actions And Background

NASA Actions

Lead Center for Occupational Health: Kennedy Space Center

- Provide web site for information
 - Travel overseas
 - Toxic substances
 - Special medical topics
 - Health promotion topics
- Monitor fulfillment of OSHA, NASA health regulations

Other NASA Centers

- Provide healthy lifestyle education for employees and families
- Provide quality health facilities, services, and referrals to competent medical institutions
- Provide travel immunizations and information
- Support Federal Worker 2000 to keep employees healthy and productive
- Provide a Drug Free Workplace
- Monitor for health
- Provide professional Employee Assistance counseling
- Provide hazard abatement

Background

Research indicates that, on any given day in America, as much as 80 percent of the work force at work is not fully productive. A main cause of decreased productivity is poor health. Perhaps the most important aspect of poor health is the cost of losses arising from increased errors among impaired individuals. Even more important are the unknown errors caused due to an employee decreased mental or physical state. This is in addition to the costs of employee disability, absenteeism, and direct medical costs of hospitalizations, clinic visits, diagnostics, and pharmaceuticals. Productivity is dependent on the health of

each worker. Employee health, high productivity, and mission success go hand in hand.

In Fiscal Year 1999, NASA identified a core operational philosophy for protection of the public, astronauts, its work force and its high-value equipment. A heightened state of health and well being among the NASA work force is directly relevant to achieving that safety goal.

Each year NASA spends between \$ 6 million and \$7 million on workers' compensation costs and a far greater amount on lost productivity due to loss of personnel from the job site due to injury and illness. In the current climate of shrinking resources we cannot afford that lost productivity and the loss of our most important asset, our work force.