



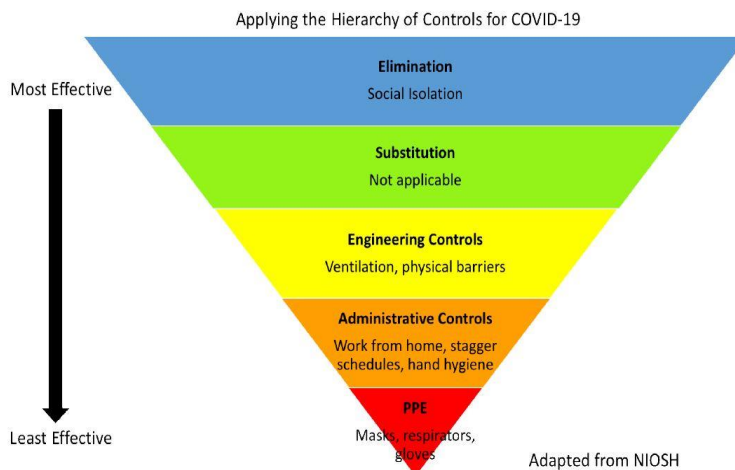
February 2021 Newsletter

From the President's Perspective:

February is a good month to catch up on housekeeping and affairs of the heart. Speaking to the latter, with Valentine's Day coming up on a Sunday (that is the Sunday after Super Bowl Sunday); it's a good plan to shower your loved ones with some affection and attention. Notice, the Big Game will not be interfering with your affectionate efforts, so plan something memorable.

Our January virtual meeting was a great opportunity to learn about how HVAC systems work and how ventilation can be a critical component in controlling SARS-CoV-2 (COVID viruses) in the workplace. Jason Mock, PE; from Watts Architecture and Engineering, did an excellent job in explaining that in language that anyone could easily understand; coupled with excellent graphics. Kudos to Jason for his efforts! If you missed it, the slides are on our Chapter Website!

If you want to believe in science; controlling a hazard by engineering a control is far more efficient and certain in effect than using administrative controls or PPE. The Hierarchy of Controls (HoC) is one principle of safety science that has yet to be disputed. When we rely on consistent human behavior to prevent harm to people from a hazard, we can expect hazard control failures.



This version of the HoC came directly from the CDC Website back in June 2020. I have successfully used it to illustrate what we should be considering regarding control of SARS – CoV – 2 virus exposure.

When considering control of chemical exposure hazards in the workplace, the concept of substituting a substance with less toxic effects (or none at all) for one requiring higher degrees of control is a valid hazard control strategy.

There are those who will think that the HoC does not apply based on information you are exposed to by the popular media of today. Yet, if we think of how COVID data has varied with the seasons and new viral mutations, the concept of engineering controls vs. PPE or additional administrative controls (including enforced social isolation, although it is considered elimination) given the consistent nature of HVAC engineering controls, especially filtration and sterilization of air in buildings, are far more efficient and allow for business continuity. Engineering controls will require some human interaction; evaluation to conditions, selection of control strategies, design, implementation and maintenance; but do not usually require adoption of a new mindset or routine, and function on a consistent basis (think guardrail system vs. personal fall arrest system for fall hazard control).



Way too often we, safety professionals who are tasked with facilitating an organization's safety program, tend to default rely on PPE vs. looking at the HoC to control a hazard. Without trying to create internal agada, think about how effective your safety program is after looking at the following 3 examples.

Does wearing Hi Viz on a site with a lot of vehicular traffic make the site safer? For that matter, does admonishing operators to look out for pedestrians and pedestrians to make contact with equipment operators? Or would it make more sense to establish traffic zones where pedestrians are excluded for the most part or exclude equipment? On most construction sites I visit these days, EVERYONE is wearing Hi Viz. A casual observation of activity on the site indicates that there is little change in behavior of either pedestrians or operators; near catastrophic interactions still take place.

What about fall hazard control? Do we tend to minimize fall hazards or address them as not readily controllable and write up plans for Controlled Access Zones? Do we just tell our workers to "tie off if you are X feet above the ground"? Do we take advantage of new technologies (there are some really clever and cool devices to create compliant anchor points out there) in fall arrest/fall restraint? Or, better yet, do we encourage our design teams to look at designing out fall hazards during construction and during the life cycle of the building/system? The latter approach is really the best one as it does not require a high degree of consistent personnel interaction to be successful at hazard control.

Noise is another issue where design is way more effective than PPE. If we can substitute quieter systems, isolate noisy equipment in sound absorbing enclosures, we can protect ourselves against hearing loss far better than using PPE. For an example, how many of us actually did a noise level survey and calculated the NRR needed to reduce the level under the hearing protector to < 85 dBA? Or did we just buy the coolest looking canal caps, earplugs (with a high NRR) or latest earmuffs and issue them to our employees, hoping they wore them consistently when they worked in the noisy area?

Switching it up a little bit here, I will promote ASSP National. Buried in the multitude of emails that National sends out, there was a notice that there would be a FREE TO ASSP MEMBERS (hard to believe, but true) symposia on Standards from ASSP as part of SafetyFocus. This symposia covered 3 ANSI/ASSP standards the Society is involved with; Z10 – Safety Management Systems for Small & Medium Businesses, Z359 – Fall Protection, and Z244 – Lockout – Tagout (Control of Hazardous Energy). All of the presentations were of excellent quality, the presenters truly first class professionals and the virtual presentation format was a high quality experience. Did I mention it was FREE? CEU's were available for this event. There was a wealth of supporting documentation available to download as well as a unique opportunity to interface directly with the presenters and attendees via chat, making it a really nice professional development event! For those who think that only in person events are worthwhile, there is much to be said for the virtual format; especially when the event is FREE. I have attended a few online ASSP events, all have never failed to disappoint me and I came away with a bit (or a lot) more knowledge than I had before. Yes, National sends out a LOT of email, but some is really worth combing through.....

I have already said enough. Time for me to shut up and let you get back to life. Our next meeting will be on March 15; the topic is one suggested by one of our Members who attended January's meeting. It's one of my favorites too..... Look for announcements on our LinkedIn group and your meeting announcement!