

President's Message

NAOSH Week 2008 is an opportunity to engage stakeholders, showcase safety culture and leadership, and demonstrate that safety is good for business and for life.

Safety: Good for Business & for Life



"Do more than belong: participate. Do more than care: help. Do more than believe: practice."

—William Arthur Ward



ASSE members are invited to the NAOSH Week kick-off events in Washington, DC, on May 5. The day will begin at the U.S. Department of Labor, with key dignitaries, winners of the kids' poster contest and representatives from OSHA's alliance program partners. The poster awards ceremony will then be held at the U.S. Capitol. This will be followed by a special event at the National Gallery of Art. Learn more at www.asse.org/naosh08.

North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week is May 4-10. Since 1997, the observance has grown globally and now touches millions of people, thousands of businesses and many public entities, as well as professional, trade and labor organizations. The NAOSH Week logo symbolizes joint venture, cooperation and commitment to common goals shared globally. The connected hands illustrate assistance and cooperation on many levels—from interpersonal relationships in the workplace to international exchange.

In my January message, I wrote about the power of relationships and partnering. The success of NAOSH Week is a great example. Through our strategic alliance with OSHA and thanks to its many alliance program partners, NAOSH Week 2007 was highly successful. We are partnering with these supporters again in 2008, along with companies such as Turner Construction, Board of Certified Safety Professionals, the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Belt Partnership and the Safe Tank Alliance.

NAOSH Week provides an international stage from which we can illustrate how safety performance is good for business and for life. In the U.S. alone, NIOSH reports that occupational injuries and illness expenditures total nearly \$171 billion a year. It has also been reported that injury and illness costs can approach up to 5% of an organization's total costs. Establishing and sustaining effective safety and health systems can reduce costs by 20% to 40%.

Safety's positive return on investment is gaining greater attention. A recent study by global investment company Goldman Sachs JBWere found that companies that don't adequately manage occupational safety and health perform worse financially than companies that do. This suggests that investors should look at a company's occupational safety and health policies and practices as a factor in their investment strategy. ASSE's Business of Safety Committee has shared many success stories as well. Laidlaw International Inc., for example, reduced its insurance and accident claims costs by 47% after implementing safety systems. Oregon SAIF Group Insurance collaborated on safety with the construction industry to return \$11.7 million to member businesses.

NAOSH Week also gives individuals an opportunity to engage locally to make a difference in their personal sphere of influence. Here are just a few members who are making a difference this year:

- Phillip Daigle (international member), deputy theater HSE manager in Baghdad, Iraq, who is working to take the NAOSH Week celebration to more than 60,000 employees in five countries.
- Richard Bourlon (Southwest Chapter), director, health and safety service, Boy Scouts of America, which is working with ASSE to promote NAOSH Week nationwide.
- Philip Goldsmith (National Capital Chapter), deputy chief, risk management, National Gallery of Art, who helped arrange a special NAOSH Week event at the museum on May 5.
- Tony Ashdown (Chesapeake Chapter), safety manager, National Mall and Memorial Parks, which will hold its annual "Safety Dazze" event during NAOSH Week.

During NAOSH Week, ASSE will also recognize the participants in our annual Safety-on-the-Job kids' poster contest. This year, we received nearly 1,000 posters from around the world. Such record-breaking participation only happens because members get involved and make it happen. Just ask Kirby Utt and Amy Stewart, Central Ohio Chapter, who report that the contest brings new meaning to participants, their families, schools and communities. Ask Ashok Garlapati, Kuwait Chapter, who submitted nearly 470 posters from members' children and school children in Kuwait. Ask Cindy Lewis, Gulf Coast Chapter, who encouraged schools in Houston to participate in the poster contest. Or ask Region III members who will sponsor a brunch for poster winners and their families on May 4 at the National Zoo in Washington, DC. We have a great opportunity to recognize efforts such as these when we celebrate Occupational Safety and Health Professional Day on May 7 as part of NAOSH Week.

Consider the possibilities NAOSH Week brings for creating a new reality—an incident- and injury-free workplace, lower healthcare and workers' compensation costs, positive reputation and improved business opportunities—all of which are vital in today's global marketplace. This is a call to action. The NAOSH Week planners have done their part. Now it's our turn. By globally engaging all stakeholders—business, labor, government and the public—we can showcase safety culture and leadership, and demonstrate that safety is good for business and for life. Thanks in advance for your efforts.

Michael W. Thompson, CSP