

# Professional Safety

JOURNAL OF THE  
AMERICAN SOCIETY  
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## Safety Eyewear

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**ERGONOMIC INNOVATION**

**Third Annual Humantech Find It-Fix It Challenge**

Humantech's annual Find It-Fix It Challenge is designed to recognize and reward simple and effective workplace solutions that result in increased productivity, improved worker morale, and fewer workplace injuries and illnesses. The contest, open to all Humantech clients past or present, was derived from Humantech RAPID Team Events, which are based on the concept of making quick, simple, visible changes to improve ergonomic issues in the workplace.

In the 2008 challenge, Gerdau Ameristeel's Charlotte, NC, facility received top honors for its reline ladle/brick chute. Honorable mentions were



The third annual Find It-Fix It Challenge ends Sept. 15, 2009.

given to Veyance Technologies, Sun Prairie, WI, for its extrusion/mechanical winch and Genie Industries, Building Seven, Redmond, WA, for its auto cable cutter.

The third annual Find It-Fix It Challenge runs through Sept. 15, 2009. Organizations are asked to submit their best workplace improvement, highlighting the implementation of a creative, sustainable and high-impact ergonomic solution. New this year, organizations are being asked to submit an online entry form as well as to complete and upload an entry PowerPoint template and original photographs. An information package and the PowerPoint template can be downloaded from [www.humantech.com](http://www.humantech.com). Questions about the online application process or the challenge can be submitted via e-mail to [finditfixit@humantech.com](mailto:finditfixit@humantech.com).

Fifteen finalists will be selected by a panel of cer-

**ASSE Member Helps Win First Safe-In-Sound Award**

Handling water sanitation can be louder than it seems. There are pumps, engines, trucks, fans and a plethora of other sound sources that can damage a worker's hearing. In Ohio, facilities are not required to follow OSHA regulations for hearing loss prevention programs, but Connie Muncy, ASSE member and safety officer at the Montgomery County Water Services plant in Ohio, has implemented a program that not only complies with the regulations, but also exceeds them. Her work earned the plant's first NIOSH Safe-In-Sound award in the Safety Service category.

Muncy says NIOSH was particularly impressed by the plant's internal safety intranet site. This site, accessible anywhere at any hour of the day, gave employees knowledge about what safety equipment they would need for each job. Unlike many professions, employees at the water plant are not fixed in a specific occupation. Maintenance, vehicle repair, field

officers, water reduction plant operators and inspectors often cover for each other. This makes it hard to learn specific regulations, so the site allows employees to know what hearing protection equipment they need in different areas of work.

"Because your duties are so widely varied . . . it's easy for people to not understand what the danger is," Muncy says.

The facility also uses signs to label areas that have particularly damaging sound, such as near fans or pumps. These signs also tell employees what gear they should be using to protect their hearing. Using new engineering controls, such as machines that produce less noise, is also part of the facility's current and future plans, Muncy says. "We're trying to take the guesswork out of it."

Muncy also involved the facility's employees in identifying sound hazards. For example, allowing employees to use noise monitors to identify hearing hazards and learn about them made the project important to employees as well. They were able to learn about the hazards that existed in their own workplace.

Muncy also outlined the cost of hearing impairment as part of the hands-on approach to motivate employees to be part of this process. Instead of telling employees to comply because it is the law or because it is good for you, employees learned that to live with hearing impairment means buying a special telephone, a hearing aid, a vibrating alarm bed and other things to get through the work day. Muncy says this behavior-based communication gave employees a sense of what this would cost them physically and financially and gave them a sense of the dangers they faced. "We want employees to initiate the buy-in themselves," she says.

If an employee ever loses his/her hearing, Muncy looks not only at the environment in which s/he works but also at the chemicals that may exist in that area and the employee's habits at home. Certain ototoxic chemicals in the workplace and medications can damage hearing, if only temporarily, and defining that in the workplace can be important for every employee. But what an employee does at home can compound with

**Nominations Deadline for Safe-In-Sound Award Is July 31**

To address the problem of hearing loss in U.S. workplaces, NIOSH, in partnership with the National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA), has developed an award to recognize excellence in hearing loss prevention. Launched in 2007, the Safe-in-Sound Award honors organizations that document measurable achievements in hearing loss prevention programs in the work environment. The goal is to learn from the real-world experiences of successful companies. The awards will be presented at the 35th NHCA conference in February 2010, to be held in Orlando, FL.

Applicants will be evaluated against key performance indicators in a review process designed to evaluate hearing loss prevention programs in each of three work sectors: construction, manufacturing and service. In addition, a fourth award for innovation in hearing loss prevention will recognize an individual and/or business entity, regardless of sector/NAICS code affiliation, for a new product, training program, software program or other new and effective idea.

For information on the award and how to submit nominations, visit [www.safeinsound.us](http://www.safeinsound.us). The deadline to submit nominations is July 31, 2009.

tified professional ergonomists and Humantech staff members. From the field of finalists, two honorable mentions and one first-place winner will be selected. The finalists will be notified by early November and the winning photos and submissions will be posted on the Humantech website in early December.

*Last year's Find-It Fix-It Challenge winner, Gerdau Ameristeel-Charlotte's brick chute design, was featured on pp. 22-25 of Professional Safety's June 2009 issue.*

#### PREVENTIVE CARE

### Organizations Launch National Campaign to Stay Healthy

Department of Health and Human Services, the Ad Council and Sesame Workshop (the nonprofit education organization behind *Sesame Street*) have partnered to launch a national public service advertising campaign to encour-

work habits to break the threshold and damage hearing. When at home and doing things such as mowing the grass or working with loud, large machinery, employees should practice the same safety practices they do at work to protect their ears, Muncy says.

Muncy says she was fortunate that her director bought into her ideas early, as it made the process of earning approval much easier. While the traditional ideas of "we want to protect our workers" was indeed part of the proposal, the fact is the company can save a lot of money from workers' compensation fees to use elsewhere. Getting management to understand that was a key selling point.

The facility also plans to implement new technology. One example of this is ProEars earphones. These devices block out louder, damaging noises while letting human speech frequencies pass, protecting ears from higher decibel levels. During a trial of this technology, employees really loved it and the facility plans on getting more, Muncy says.

Communicating to employees the dangers of hearing impairment and getting management's support in the plan have helped the facility get the recognition it now has. Muncy plans to attend conferences and tour other water facilities to help them meet this same level of hearing protection. She says the only way to counter the "silent epidemic" is to be the leader that creates the new approaches necessary to counter it and communicate with each other. "Communication is definitely number one," Muncy says.

age families and children to take steps to protect themselves from the H1N1 flu virus and continue to practice healthy habits.

The campaign focuses on providing accurate information about how to practice healthy habits and highlights simple, everyday actions that lead to staying healthy and keeping germs away. Sesame Workshop produced a television public service announcement featuring *Sesame Street* characters explaining the importance of habits such as hand washing, avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and sneezing into the bend

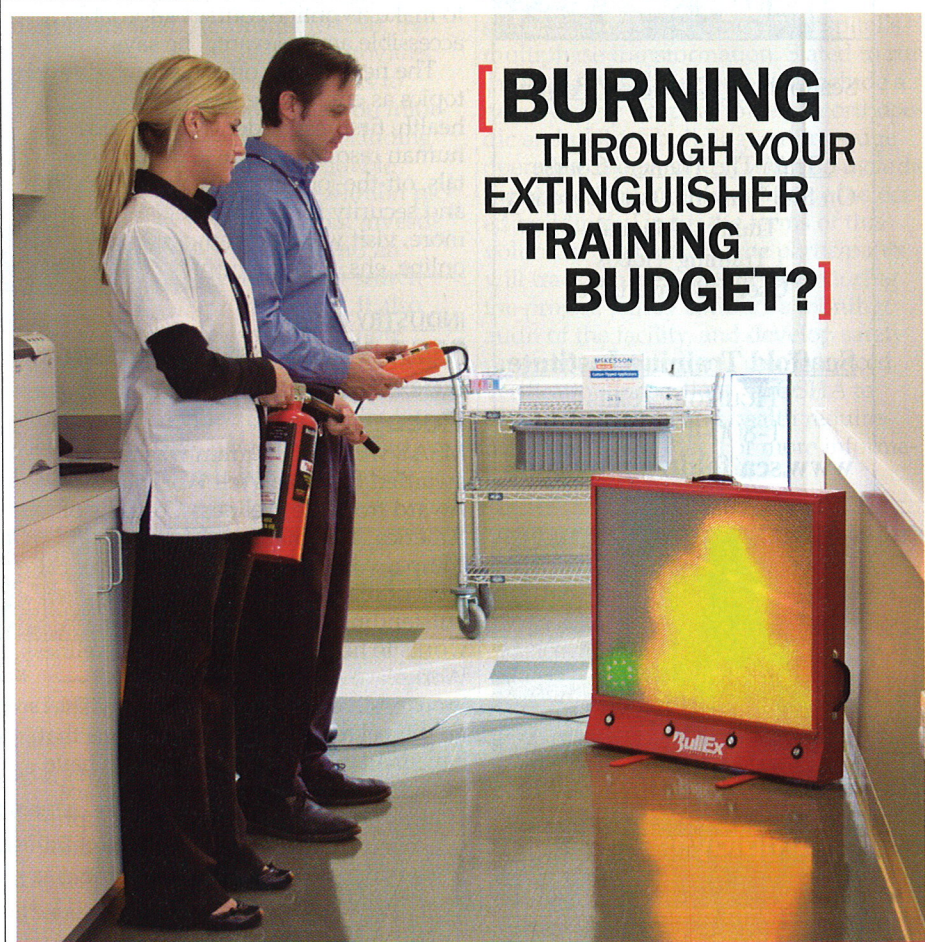
of your arm to prevent the spread of germs. It also encourages audiences to visit the CDC website ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) to learn more information.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### AHMP Expands Online Course Library

More than 200 environmental, health, safety and security (EHS&S) courses have been added to Alliance of Hazardous Material Professional's (AHMP)

*Industry Notes continued on page 16*



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