



**STARK COUNTY**

**SAFETY COUNCIL**

**member news**

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## The 2020 Flu Season and COVID-19

*Provided by Curt Speck, President,  
Safety Resources Company of Ohio and SCSC Steering Committee Member*

**T**he flu season is rapidly approaching. This year we not only have to deal with flu but also with COVID-19. Currently influenza cases worldwide are low and it is believed that many of the mitigation techniques used to combat COVID-19 will also prevent the spread of the flu, but the truth is, we just don't know how flu season and COVID-19 will impact one another.

Both the flu and COVID-19 are spread from person-to-person amongst people who are in close contact with one another. Respiratory droplets formed when people with the illness cough, sneeze or talk is the most common mode of transmission. Transmission can occur directly by airborne droplets or indirectly by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

It is important to know that you can get both the flu and COVID-19 at the same time and it is often hard to tell the difference. Both are potentially serious respiratory conditions. Both can have widely varying degrees of signs and symptoms that can range from no symptoms at all to severe symptoms. Symptoms that are the same for both conditions include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches and pains, and headache. The most prevalent difference between the two is a new treatment plan.

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**Save the Date!**  
**SCSC Webinar**

**October 28, 2020**  
**8:00 a.m.**

**“OSHA & How They  
are Working with  
COVID”**

**Speakers: Howie Eberts  
& Todd Jensen of OSHA**

*Watch your e-mail for more  
information & how to  
register.*

**The Fire Prevention  
Breakfast planned for  
October 2020 has  
been postponed until  
October 2021**



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**Stark County Safety Council Mission Statement:** *To provide a forum for safety and health information, education and networking through leadership, innovation, facilitation, programming, and support, in partnership with other public and private organizations.*

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Having COVID-19 does not protect you from the flu and having the flu does not protect you from COVID-19. Experts are recommending that everyone over the age of 6 months (with rare exceptions) get the flu shot. Flu vaccinations have been proven to be safe and effective against various strains of the flu. The flu vaccine does not provide any protection against COVID-19, but it does have significant benefits in reducing the risk of illness, hospitalization and death from the flu. Getting a flu vaccination does not increase your risk of getting COVID-19.

How illness in the workplace is handled this year will probably look dramatically different than it has in the past. Make sure your place of employment has a plan in place to deal with anyone who arrives sick or who becomes sick during the day. Be sure to share the plan with all workers. And, of course, as an employee, if you are feeling ill with signs and symptoms consistent with the flu or COVID-19, stay home and contact your physician. Do not risk your well-being or the well-being of others by “toughing it out” and going to work.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION RE: UPCOMING SAFETY COUNCIL EVENTS FOR UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**NOTE: The Fire Prevention Breakfast planned for October, 2020 has been postponed until October 2021**

The Stark County Safety Council has is planning some great speakers and topics for the FREE safety webinars. We hope that you will join us by staying safe and engaged throughout FY21. Even though we cannot meet in person we are still available for your safety needs. Please feel free to contact Monique Thompson with any questions by email [moniquet@cantonchamber.org](mailto:moniquet@cantonchamber.org) or call (330) 456-7253.

For the latest info on COVID-19 visit [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov)  
For the latest information on COVID-19s effect on BWC, email [BWCCOVID19@bwc.state.oh.us](mailto:BWCCOVID19@bwc.state.oh.us).

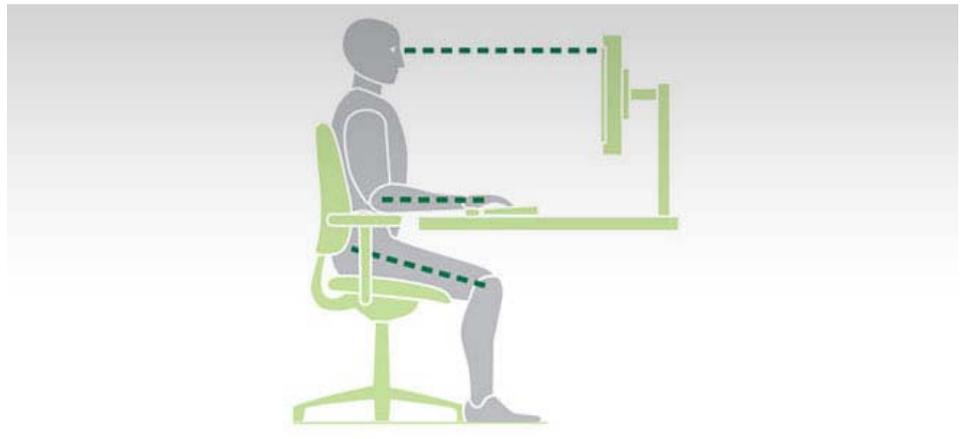
# ROBIN'S CORNER

By Robin Watson, Ohio BWC Representative



**Q: Since we have employees working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, do I need to be concerned about their computer workstation set-up?**

**A:** Yes, it is important to include home-based employees into your office ergonomic program. Employees can experience discomfort from improper computer workstation set-up both in the workplace and at home. If employees are experiencing discomfort such as neck, back, shoulder, or wrist



pain during the workday, adjustments need to be made before it becomes chronic and develops into a Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD). According to 2020 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index, tasks that cause workplace MSDs are in the top 10 causes of disabling workplace injuries costing U.S. businesses \$20 billion dollars. To help prevent MSD injuries for the home-based office employee, BWC published a YouTube video to improve employee's comfort utilizing common household items. Click on the following link to view, [BWC home office set-up](#).

If you would like additional resources or to request a virtual office ergonomic assessment, please contact your local BWC Ergonomist or request their service on-line at [BWC Safety and Health Consulting Request](#). Essentially, their consultations are free to use since your BWC premiums include their services.

# Workers Compensation Health Disparities in a Post COVID-19 Environment

*By Don Lipsy, AVP, National Technical Compliance, Managed Care, Sedgwick*

The inarguable fact of COVID-19 is that the coronavirus itself has been an indiscriminate and equal-opportunity tragedy on a global scale. Women and men, young and old, across the world and right next door, COVID-19 has impacted the way in which we live our lives irrespective of who we are or where we come from.

Yet, from the tragedy of this global pandemic are changes that may positively shape how we engage one another for years to come.

Workers' compensation is a microscopic and unique ecosystem through which to look at some of the positive changes driven by COVID-19, but there are still factors to consider as the world and our industry evolves. In fact, we may not know the true impact of COVID-19 for some time, despite the best clinical and analytical resources. What we do know is that managing care will never look the same, when we consider the following:

- Since March of 2020, a total of 46 states have adopted either permanent or emergency rules expanding or authorizing the use of telemedicine and telehealth services as a direct response to COVID-19
- Since March of 2020, the use of telehealth or telemedicine has increased over 200%

The advance of telemedicine and telehealth, previously shunned by many regulatory bodies, is undoubtedly helping close the gap in getting necessary medical care to injured workers who could otherwise not be treated. Similarly, increased use in translation and transportation services reflect an advancement in the commitment to caring for injured workers, even in the most challenging of circumstances. Still, we need to do more.

When we look at issues of behavioral health, recently conducted [national survey data](#) shows that 88% or more employees report the time since the onset of COVID-19 to be the most stressful time in their career. Within the workplace, 62% of employees also report that this stress and anxiety has led to one or more lost hours of work. Unsurprisingly, [data from pharmacy benefit managers](#) shows a significant increase in new prescriptions for anti-depressant, anti-anxiety and anti-insomnia medications as well.

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Injured workers, like so many of us, spent a prolonged period in relative isolation due to COVID-19. For some, this meant only having interaction at work and, for many, it meant no longer having work. These factors reinforce the need to look at how behavioral health and return to work services should be enhanced to meet the new reality of a reduced workforce.

Another area of additional focus needs to be on how we understand and address the disparity with which COVID-19 is impacting women and people of color in the workplace. In many ways, workers' compensation has been, and will always be, a reflection of the times in our nation. This has never been more evident when we look at the people most frequently filing claims for COVID-19. The hardest hit among our workers are the first responders, healthcare workers, industrial workers, agricultural workers and all the essential workers who keep us in food, medication and transportation. The data also shows that these same workers are part of communities that are primarily comprised of women and people of color.

- Women make up [78%](#) of all healthcare workers
- Women also make up [73%](#) of healthcare workers testing positive for COVID-19
- People of color make up [49%](#) of all food manufacturing workers and [37.9%](#) of all crop production workers
- Is trying to empower injured workers with technology-driven solutions leaving behind people who have little to no access to smartphones or wi-fi?
- Are medical networks constructed to address not just timely access to care but access to care with a provider who can engage an injured worker in their first language or who comes from a similar cultural background?
- When thinking about comorbidity analytics in our injured worker population, are we investing time and energy into understanding the biopsychosocial dynamics of injured workers who come from underserved populations?

There is value in knowing this information. It highlights that, when being responsive to the needs of injured workers affected by COVID-19, we must be conscious of the makeup of the populations needing the most help. From how we engage an injured worker to how we look at their possible outcomes of care, we must start asking and answering some hard questions:

*Most importantly, when considering these questions...what steps are we taking to address them?*

The beautiful diversity of thought and skill that individuals bring to our workplaces is not divorced from the same beautiful diversity which makes them human. When we forget to actively acknowledge and address that in treating those who are injured or ill, we approach managing care with blinders on.

Understanding the uniqueness of people can lead to transformative care and improved outcomes for all participants in our industry. COVID-19 has forced us all to reinvent to meet the challenges and to find new ways of reaching out and caring for injured workers and, so far, we have met that challenge halfway. Let's not stop now.

## *Safety Tip*

# October is Fire Safety Month.

*In preparation, here are a few basic fire precautions to know and use on your jobs.*

*Provided by Randy Martin, Safety Director, The Beaver Excavating Company & Chair, Stark County Safety Council*

### **Make sure you know:**

- The location of the fire extinguisher nearest to your work area;
- The location of emergency exits from buildings and/or the emergency evacuation meeting/muster point(s).

### **In case of fire:**

- Warn others, call for help if required.
- You're probably not a firefighter, so please don't try to fight or put out the fire. Use the extinguisher to help you get away from the fire.
- Know how to use a fire extinguisher. Remember the PASSword.
  - **P = PULL** the pin to unlock the extinguishers.
  - **A = AIM** at the base of the fire and stand 6' – 10' away, if possible.
  - **S = SQUEEZE** the handle to shoot the extinguisher.
  - **S = SWEEP** from side to side.
- If you're trained in the use of fire extinguishers only use them to put out small fires. If the fire is, or could become, too large to control call 911 and/or pull the fire alarm.

### **Remember, the best protection from fires is prevention.**

- Store flammable chemicals/materials properly and away from ignition sources.
- When doing work that creates sparks or flames (hot work) make sure flammable/combustible chemicals/materials are removed from the area or protected if they can't be moved.

Check extinguishers monthly [1926.150(c)(1)(viii)]. Make sure the gauge is in the green and that the extinguisher is in good condition. Replace any damaged or discharged extinguishers.

Most importantly, you are more important than any building, materials or equipment. Never put your life at risk trying to fight a fire. Use that extinguisher as a way to escape from the fire and to get yourself and your co-workers to safety.

# FREE BWC SAFETY CLASSES



All BWC “in-person” classes have been cancelled until further notice.

The BWC Library has a “Streaming Videos” service from “Training Network NOW”. There are approximately 260 videos that can be streamed for **FREE**. The videos are anywhere between 4 minutes – 20 minutes long. Please email the library at [www.library@bwc.state.oh.us](mailto:www.library@bwc.state.oh.us) to set up an account to use this service.

## Resources

- For the latest info on COVID-19 visit [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov)
- For the latest information on COVID-19s effect on BWC, email [BWCCOVID19@bwc.state.oh.us](mailto:BWCCOVID19@bwc.state.oh.us).
- The BWC Library creates a monthly ‘Safety Update’ available at [www.bwc.ohio.gov](http://www.bwc.ohio.gov)
- Occupational Health & Safety Administration—[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

**Your Stark County Safety Council is hoping you are well and staying safe.**

**Please note that Connie Cerny, SCSC Program Manager, is out of the office.**

**If you have any questions, please contact Monique Thompson at [moniquet@cantonchamber.org](mailto:moniquet@cantonchamber.org) or (330) 456-7253.**

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*Stark County Safety Council  
Photos From the Archives*

