Wellness and Safety Culture in the Marijuana Industry

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Acknowledgements

MAP ERC
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Wellness & Safety Culture

• Assess and describe opportunities to promote healthy behaviors among industry workers

• Provide guidance to employers on how to promote a culture of wellness and safety, with specific examples of proven strategies appropriate for the industries

• Identify organizational level interventions to improving health and safety

• Identify training opportunities for health promotion and health protection
Overview

• Introductions and MAP ERC Interdisciplinary Course
• Fall 2013 Marijuana Grow Operation (MGO) Assessment
• Observations (Total Worker Health Approach):
  – Environmental Exposures
  – General Safety
  – Ergonomics
  – Organizational Culture
• Work processes and OSH recommendations
• Future projects
  – PILOT Project Proposal
  – Worksite training
Project Overview

- Medical marijuana grower, producer and retailer
  - 18 full time
  - 15 contracted
  - 45% women
- Assessment to examine occupational and environmental health and safety
- The Golden Child of MMJ
- Adopting best-practices from agriculture
- Expanding rapidly
Overall Observations

- Organizational supports
- Security
- New technologies
- Engineering controls
- Air monitoring
- Major focus on “Plant Health”

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Environment

- Building impairment
- High humidity
- High chemical concentration
- Limited ventilation
- Water systems
- Fire and explosion hazards
  - Electrical
  - CO2 generators
PPE

• Provide PPE engaging in potentially hazardous tasks
• Latex gloves for trimming
• Lab coats – to limit plant cross contamination
• Half-mask 3M respirator for pesticide application
Potential Health & Safety Hazards

- **Skin and airway irritation** (specific to strain)
  - Trimming times during harvest seem to provoke reactions
- **Elevated levels of CO and/or CO2 and other gases**
- **Ventilation and HVAC systems** – oxygen-depleted
- **Electrical systems**
- **Pluming systems (not assessed)**

- **Pesticides** – limited exposures
- **Mold** – none observed but no sampling was conducted
- **Ergonomics** - Awkward wrist postures in trimming work (10-12 hours per day)
  - Modified work stations
General Safety

Risks and Exposures

• Standing water
• Hoses
• High-intensity grow lamps
• Tight spaces

Recommendations

• Safety signage
• Identify best method for humidifiers
• Identify and mark all slipping hazards
• Remove and properly dispose of any chemicals
Employee Use on the Job

- 90-100% of employees are cardholders
- They use medical marijuana before or during shifts
- Instances of “over-medicated” employees on the job
- Impact on work performance
- Worker compensation policies
Other Observations

- Retail security
- Hostile customers
- Contractors during harvest
- Seasonality

- Stigma: both industry and workforce
- Potential buffers:
  - Org. culture
  - Social support
  - Autonomy and task rotation
  - Focus on “wellness”
Total Worker Health

Provided services and benefits:

- Tobacco control
- Nutrition
- Stress Management
- Mental Health (free counseling)
- Substance Abuse

- Cancer screening, prevention and survivorship
- Violence and harassment prevention plan
- Health insurance
- Incentives for participation

**#1 factor contributing to providing benefits = high impact on employee job satisfaction**

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MAP ERC PILOT Project

- Recognized need for further investigation
- Applied for NIOSH PILOT funding through MAP ERC
- Research-to-Practice (R2P)
- 5 specific aims:
  - Understand worker population
  - Identify health, safety, and psychological work stress hazards
  - Assess awareness of OESH issues among workers
  - Identify workplace support systems
  - Disseminate results, provide training recommendations
Worksite Training

- Translate findings into training recommendations
  - Primary, secondary, and tertiary
- Disseminate throughout industry
- Evaluate effectiveness
  - Trainee reactions and learning
- Future goals
  - Work with CDPHE, OSHA, and NIOSH to determine OESH surveillance methods in this industry
### Wellness & Safety Culture

Assess and describe opportunities to promote healthy & safe behaviors among industry workers.

#### Observations
- Strong leadership support for employee health & wellbeing
- Currently, safety and health practice might be reactive
- Inconsistency of written policies and practices
- Lack of training
- No instruction manual on how to build or operate a grow

#### Opportunities
- Conduct a workplace and safety assessment
- Integrate safety and health into manager and employee
- Make employee health and safety a priority
- Communicate commitment to health and safety company-wide (consistently)
Wellness & Safety Culture
Assess and describe opportunities to promote healthy & safe behaviors among industry workers.
Observations Continued -----
• Long work hours
• Employees are cross-trained
• Use of marijuana both on/off the job
• Potential risks identified:
  – Retail: security and stress from dealing with difficult customers
  – Grow: potential chemical exposures, allergens
  – All: job security, stigmatization

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Wellness & Safety Culture

Provide guidance to employers on how to promote a culture of wellness and safety.

– Conduct a worksite health and safety survey
– Comply with all applicable OSHA standards
– Communicate the importance of assuring safe and healthy workplace
– Provide training, education and assistance to all employees
Wellness & Safety Culture

Identify organizational level interventions to improving health and safety.

– Establish safety goals based on OSHA standards and guidelines
– Communicate commitment to safety and health
– Create leading and lagging safety and health indicators
– Engage owners and managers to educate them on safety and health best-practices
Questions?

Thank you.