



Respiratory Cancer and Disease Deaths Higher among Construction Workers

Respiratory cancer and non-malignant respiratory disease-related mortality among older construction workers – findings from the Health and Retirement Study

Xuanwen Wang, Xiuwen Sue Dong, Laura Welch and Julie Largay. Occupational Medicine & Health Affairs, May 2016.

Overview

CPWR researchers analyzed data from the RAND Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and the HRS cross-year National Death Index (NDI) - Cause of Death file, to explore the risk of respiratory cancer and non-malignant respiratory disease (NMRD)-related mortalities among older construction workers. This study adds to the growing evidence that construction exposures may increase the risk of respiratory cancer and NMRD and smoking exaggerates this risk.

Key Findings

- Older workers whose longest job was in construction trades were about twice as likely to die of respiratory cancer or NMRD than their white-collar counterparts, after adjusting for smoking and other major confounders.
- Smoking significantly elevated the risk of respiratory cancer and NMRD mortalities among older workers. The risk is magnified among construction workers due to the synergistic effects of smoking and other hazardous respiratory exposures, including welding dust, silica, and asbestos.
- The health and well-being of workers are greatly influenced by exposures to occupational hazards and risks associated with individual health behaviors. The best way to protect workers from respiratory hazards is simultaneous prevention efforts against both occupational exposures and smoking.

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See full text:

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