The National Occupational Research Agenda—
The Second Decade of NORA

The National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) was first established in 1996 by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and its partners as a framework to guide occupational safety and health research for the decade that followed. The process to develop NORA resulted in 21 research priorities, which can be found in the original document.

NORA arose from the recognition that occupational safety and health research in both the public and the private sectors would benefit from targeting limited resources at important priorities. The creators of NORA also recognized the need to address changes in the workplace, as well as the increasingly diversified work force, in the United States. The distribution of jobs in the United States economy continues to shift from manufacturing to services. Longer hours, compressed work weeks, shift work, reduced job security, and part-time and temporary work are realities of the modern workplace. NORA continues to address the broadly recognized need to focus research in the areas with the highest likelihood of reducing the still significant toll of workplace injury and illness. Each day, an average of 9,000 workers in the United States sustain disabling injuries on the job, 16 die of injuries sustained at work, and 137 die of work-related diseases. The economic burden of this continuing toll is high. Data from a NIOSH-funded study reveal direct and indirect costs of occupational injuries and illnesses to be $171 billion annually ($145 billion for injuries and $26 billion for illnesses), compared with $33 billion for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, $67.3 billion for Alzheimer’s disease, $164.3 billion for circulatory diseases, and $170.7 billion for cancer.

Building on the success of NORA, development of the second decade of NORA began in 2005 and will use a sector-based approach. NIOSH and its partners will form eight Sector Research Councils (Figure), including participants from academia, industry, labor, and government. Each council will draft sector-based research goals, objectives, and action plans to provide guidance to the entire occupational safety and health community for moving research to practice in workplaces. In addition, a Cross-Sector Research Council will be formed to identify opportunities for common research across the sectors.

Several town hall meetings are being conducted around the United States to help guide development of the second decade of NORA by gaining input from occupational safety and health stakeholders and partners, labor and employer groups, professional societies, academics, employers, workers, state and local public health officials, and elected officials. The goals of these meetings are to:

- Provide an appropriate public forum where stakeholders and partners are encouraged to present their views about occupational safety and health in general and research in particular.
- Increase public understanding and participation concerning the occupational safety and health needs of workers and employers.
- Reinforce to workers and employers the human and practical benefits of preventing illness and injury at work.
- Inform and educate NIOSH and the general public regarding development and implementation of NORA for the next decade.

In addition, comments about research areas needing to be addressed within each sector can be provided to NIOSH through its website (www2a.cdc.gov/niosh-comments/nora-comments/input.asp).

In April 2006, the NORA Symposium will be held in Washington, DC, to elaborate the success of the first decade of NORA and kickoff the second decade. Workshops, research sessions, and posters relevant to these important topics will be presented.