



Women and safety report offers solutions to make workplaces safer

PARK RIDGE, Illinois (April 11, 2019) — The American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) today released a [report on women and safety in the modern workplace](#) – a follow-up to its Women’s Workplace Safety Summit held last October near Chicago. The report focuses on three main challenges faced by women in the workplace and offers potential solutions. It is just one outcome of ASSP’s ongoing initiative to improve diversity and inclusion throughout the safety industry while ultimately better protecting workers everywhere.

Helping women advance into leadership positions in the occupational safety and health profession, increasing the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) for women, and reducing violence against women at work are the targets of [“Women and Safety in the Modern Workplace: Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace Can Boost Safety, Productivity and Profitability.”](#) The report, sponsored by Amazon, is available on the ASSP website along with three videos that discuss the obstacles women face on the job.

“Women make up nearly half of the global workforce and experience occupational risks differently than men,” said ASSP President-Elect Diana Stegall, CSP, CFPS, ARM, CPCU. “But safety interventions often take a one-size-fits-all approach. This report advocates for gender-specific solutions.”

Barriers to advancement: Because the occupational safety and health profession typically has been male-dominated, women face barriers to entering and advancing in safety careers. Solutions in the ASSP report include emboldened recruitment and retention efforts; formalized mentorship and sponsorship programs; systemic safeguards that remove barriers and promote success; and the creation of an inclusive culture that incorporates differences rather than trying to mitigate them. Also, organizations must pay close attention to the existence of unconscious bias among employees to help them understand and overcome gender-related prejudices.

PPE for women: Women across many industries have struggled with ill-fitting PPE, putting them at higher risk on the job. To improve the availability of PPE designed for women, the ASSP report recommends that manufacturers gather more data in developing universal fit guidelines; provide ratings and reviews of PPE and work gear; and publish guidance materials for users. ASSP is in the early stages of developing a technical report that will provide guidance on selecting gear for different populations.

Violence at work: According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, homicides are the leading cause of workplace fatalities among women. In 2016, they represented 24 percent of all fatal occupational injuries to women, compared to 9 percent of fatal workplace injuries to men. Verbal abuse, physical attacks and sexual assault are additional concerns. The ASSP report suggests educating and training employees on the problems; evaluating building security procedures; and providing a hotline so workers can easily report issues.

“A diverse and inclusive workplace that includes more women in leadership roles is not only safer, but it also leads to greater productivity and profitability,” Stegall said. “Company executives need to make diversity and inclusion a strategic priority if they want to attract outstanding talent and maximize their financial performance.”

As the impetus behind the ASSP report, the Women’s Workplace Safety Summit involved more than 50 diverse safety experts from businesses, nonprofits, labor, academia, government and professional associations. The objective was to stimulate change and help solve longstanding issues experienced by women in the workforce.

ASSP’s [Women in Safety Excellence](#) (WISE) Common Interest Group helped drive the summit and the production of the report. WISE is a leading member community within ASSP’s global membership of more than 38,000 safety and health professionals, promoting equity and advancement of women in the safety profession. WISE is committed to influencing industry and identifying solutions to safety and health challenges that impact women worldwide.