



Cumulative Trauma of the Upper Extremity: A Failure of the Safety Profession

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Like many corporate functions, safety faces the challenge of applying decreasing resources to workplace safety in an environment where needs are growing rapidly. As with other functions, the solution is to more effectively use resources or increase the safety department's efficiency. First, however, priorities must be defined. Only then can resources be directed to areas that will generate the largest payback in terms of increased safety and health.

Normally, these priorities should depend upon the problem's scope, measured in terms of either incidence or severity rates. For example, a high incidence rate of paper cuts caused by wrapping cut sheets may receive fewer resources than a program to protect guillotine operators, despite the fact that few amputations have occurred, or are anticipated.

Thus, on an industry-by-industry, process-by-process basis, safety engineers must base resource allocation on some measure of significance. Local site processes naturally demand that local priorities continue to be established in order to reflect individual workplace risks. Distortion of this evaluation process ensures that resources will be diverted or inappropriately allocated to