



National Institute of
Environmental Health Sciences
Worker Training Program

Award Recipient Meeting



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RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC



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NIEHS Strategic Plan 2025-2029

The themes and goals of our strategic plan reflect NIEHS' strong commitment to adhering to a specific set of guiding values in our work to advance environmental health and fully integrate it into the broader field of health research.

These values include:

Collaboration — Searching out opportunities for cooperative teamwork and partnerships to drive synergistic engagement toward a common mission.

Communication — Safeguarding the intentional and transparent exchange of information built on mutual respect and trust.

Distributive Leadership — Inspiring and empowering the workforce, at all levels, to utilize their talents, strengths, and expertise to assume leadership responsibilities and accountability.

Innovation — Fostering and rewarding forward-thinking and cutting-edge ideas for solving current and emerging challenges.

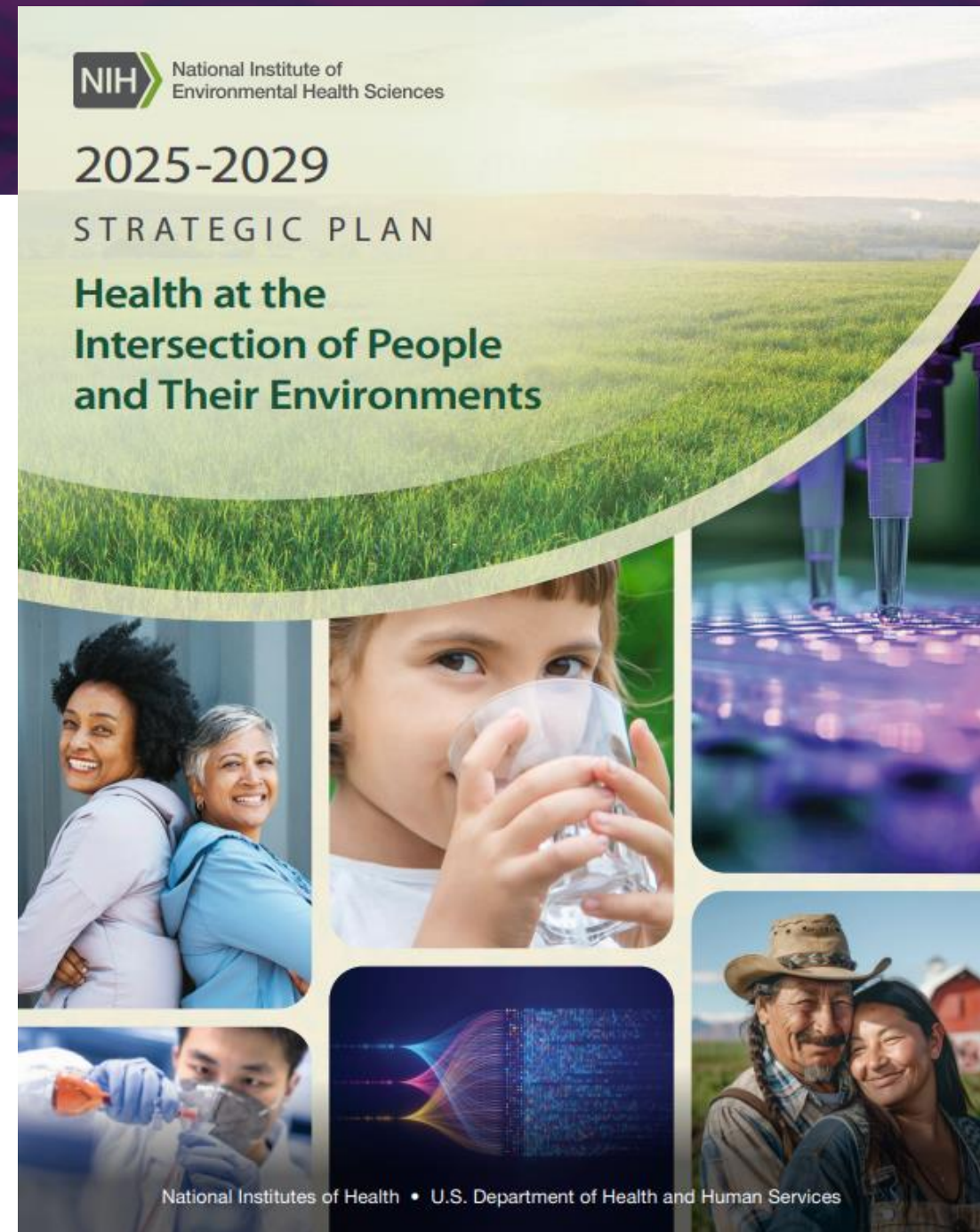
Workforce Diversity — Cultivating an inclusive and well-skilled staff of professionals whose unique perspectives are respected and valued.



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The NIEHS Strategic Plan reflects a framework where **Crosscutting Themes** span **Research Areas of Emphasis, Capacity and Infrastructure, and Scientific Management and Stewardship**.



WTP Strategic Plan, 2025-2030

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 TO 2030



Significance of HAZWOPER and Other Federal Regulations

SARA (1986) established the requirement for OSHA to develop and promulgate two standards applicable to hazardous waste operations and responses to hazardous materials incidents.

The first standard, 29 CFR 1910.120 HAZWOPER,⁶ required a standard for the protection of workers engaged in hazardous waste operations; hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal activities (TSD); and emergency responses to hazardous materials incidents without regard to location. The second standard was promulgated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at 40 CFR 311 to provide coverage for public workers otherwise exempt from coverage under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 1970.

The HAZWOPER standard is unique in that it is based on a proactive approach to worker and public health protection. Each of the three categories of operations the standard addresses (hazardous waste cleanup, TSD, and emergency response) is complex. Because hazardous exposures are difficult to predict before workers are engaged in labor, workers must be protected until actual exposures are adequately determined and protective measures are established. Consequently, the worker training provisions in the standard are rigorous and contain: pre-job core training requirements that include knowledge, skill and ability elements; site-specific training; a minimum of three days of actual field experience under the direct supervision of a trained, experienced supervisor; and annual refresher training. With respect to public health protection, the standard has extensive requirements regarding hazardous materials containment; decontamination requirements for workers and equipment to prevent transfer of hazardous materials into public environments; and hazardous waste transportation requirements.

Engagement in operations covered by the HAZWOPER standard often includes potential exposures to additional hazards for which specific standards and training requirements apply. Some examples include asbestos, lead, confined spaces, and demolition operations. As appropriate, WTP award recipients continue to develop HAZWOPER-supporting training curricula and programs for these potential exposures for their target audiences and constituencies.

OSHA published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for a standard to certify training programs but has never finalized action on that standard. As a result, no current federal standard exists specific to requirements for certification of the extensive training requirements established in the worker protection standard. OSHA amended the HAZWOPER standard to add the non-mandatory Appendix E that provides guidelines for training providers and the training program curriculum. Appendix E is based on the NIEHS WTP Minimum Criteria for 29 CFR 1910.120 training providers and the training curriculum, which was developed at a national technical consensus workshop in 1990.

⁶ The standard 29 CFR 1910.120 HAZWOPER was promulgated on March 6, 1989, at 54 FR 9317, as amended at 55 FR 14073 on April 13, 1990, and 56 FR 15832 on April 18, 1991.

Sub-Theme 6. Health and Safety at DOE Facilities

In 1992, NIEHS established an interagency agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Environmental Management (EM) to prepare and equip workers with proper training to address hazards within and around DOE sites, particularly those related to the nation's Cold War environmental legacy. This agreement was authorized by Section 3131 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 1992, establishing what is now known as the NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program. The goal of the NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program is to provide high-quality training to workers supporting the mission of DOE to ensure they are prepared to work safely in hazardous environments.

Key aspects of success for the NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program are **integrated safety management systems** and a focus on safety culture. Both DOE and WTP prioritize a safety-conscious work environment. To accomplish this, workers need to be informed about hazards, as well as their rights. Workers also need to be invited to spaces where they can openly raise safety issues or concerns without fear of retaliation. Another key aspect of success is the DOE National Training Center's **Health and Safety Training Reciprocity Program**.

This program establishes a policy for reciprocity of employee health and safety training across all DOE sites and facilities. This eliminates the need for redundant training, improves mobilization, and increases the efficiency and effectiveness of DOE operations while meeting federal health and safety requirements.

According to a recent Government Accountability Office **report**, the DOE EM manages radioactive and hazardous waste cleanup program across 16 sites using both capital asset projects and operations activities, and will spend more than \$392 billion before the nation's nuclear weapons complex is cleaned up. These types of projects highlight the need for critical WTP work to ensure the safety and health of workers who oversee and contribute to these cleanup efforts.

Objectives:

- Ensure workers receive quality, fundamental safety and health training for their assigned activities.
- Ensure workers at DOE facilities get the site-specific health and safety training needed.
- Foster a positive safety culture among workers new to the DOE complex.
- Assist in improving training of subcontractor personnel who often go without safety and health training.
- Improve collaboration with DOE organizations, including the DOE National Training Center, the Energy Facility Contractor Group, and the Labor Training Work Group, to target training topics based on lessons learned reports and assessment activities.



WTP Director Sharon Beard speaks at the 2024 DOE Energy Facility Contractors Group conference.

Alignment with NIEHS Strategic Plan

Graphic shows alignment between the NIEHS Strategic Plan and WTP Strategic Plan.



NIEHS Worker Training Program Focus Areas

- Hazardous Waste Worker Training Program (HWWTP)
- Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP)
- Hazmat Disaster Preparedness Training Program (HDPTP)
- Infectious Disease and Biological Hazards Training
- NIEHS/U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Nuclear Worker Training Program
- Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) E-Learning for HAZMAT Program

NIEHS/U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Nuclear Worker Training Program

- The NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program focuses on training workers engaged in environmental restoration, waste treatment, and emergency response activities at sites in the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons complex. An interagency agreement with DOE funds awards for this program.
- MOU between NIEHS and DOE was executed in September 2024

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Worker Training Program NIEHS Leadership



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