

PUBLIC POLICY POSITION

POSITION TITLE: Occupational Health
DATE APPROVED: June 25, 2021

POLICY PRINCIPLE ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

The American Lung Association supports efforts directed at identifying, preventing, eliminating and, when eliminating is not possible, minimizing exposure to occupational and other environmental health hazards.

Prevention

The American Lung Association supports the strengthening of existing and the development of new measures to prevent exposure to hazards that can lead to occupational lung diseases. Those measures can and should encompass a variety of components, including choosing production processes, materials, equipment, and facilities that create the lowest risk to the health of the worker or the community. The American Lung Association supports totally tobacco-free environments.

Worker Safety

The American Lung Association supports strong occupational safety and health standards and strict enforcement of these standards to protect workers. Workers at risk for diseases such as work-related asthma, pneumoconiosis, including black lung disease, silicosis, asbestosis and other occupational lung diseases, as well as infectious diseases, must be protected.

Surveillance

The American Lung Association supports the establishment and implementation of surveillance mechanisms for work-related lung diseases.

Workplace Asthma Management

The American Lung Association supports the development of national guidelines for management of work-related asthma, including primary and secondary prevention, as well as education of healthcare providers, employers and employees. Workplace protocols should be the foundation for an appropriate response to a medical emergency.

Right-To-Know

The American Lung Association supports workers' right-to-know about air quality, pollution emissions and environmental hazards in their community and workplace. The American Lung Association supports right-to-know laws, public education and awareness efforts, and other measures to accomplish this objective.

Victims' Rights

The American Lung Association supports preserving all available avenues for workers to bring actions to seek compensation for and protection from injury and/or disease attributable to environmental or occupational exposure. The civil justice system's ability to address misconduct and protect public health must not be preempted. The American Lung Association supports alternative systems, using sound scientific and medical criteria to determine injury that allow full and fair compensation for victims, so long as those systems are completely voluntary and do not diminish legal rights.

Whistleblower Protection

The American Lung Association supports strengthening the protection for workers who expose employer violations of the Occupational Safety and Health Act or other laws and regulations that protect the health and welfare of workers, the environment and the public by providing commensurate compensatory and punitive damages.

Severity of Occupational Lung Disease

The American Lung Association supports research to improve the scientific basis for diagnosis and grading of the severity of occupational lung diseases.

Workplace Ventilation

The American Lung Association supports measures to improve indoor and outdoor air quality through the use of regulations, standards, guidelines and management practices to protect the health of workers in all worksites. Effective indoor air quality measures protect primarily through the control and elimination of sources of pollution and the provision and maintenance of adequate, state-of-the-art ventilation to reduce the spread of airborne infectious organisms, allergens and particulates. The American Lung Association supports measures to require totally smokefree environments. Workers must be protected from exposure to harmful levels of radon, cleaning chemicals or pesticides. The American Lung Association urges specific planning for the prevention and cleanup of indoor air problems, including planning for emergency response.