interventions at monthly meetings of the departments of surgery and obstetrics-gynecology. Utilize communication tools such as videotapes and teleconferencing to reach all staff members to communicate risk and prevention strategies.

(3) Provide vendors of safety-oriented technology access to the institution, and have them assist in evaluations where appropriate.[15]

(4) Critically evaluate new safety-engineered devices, taking into account all potential short- and long-term costs and savings, using a multidisciplinary committee as suggested by Chiarello.[15]

(5) Consider creating the position of "Safety Champion"—ideally, an operating room professional—to coordinate projects and to serve as liaison to surgical staff. Users of hazardous devices should be involved in solutions of problems relating to device applications.

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Labor Department Launches Worker Safety Program for Nursing Homes

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Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich recently announced a seven-state initiative to protect workers in nursing homes and personal-care facilities, one of the nation's fastest growing industries. Nationwide there are 1.6 million nursing-home workers in more than 21,000 facilities.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nursing home workers face the third highest rate of occupational injuries and illnesses among all US industries. More than half of the nursing home injuries and illnesses are related to handling residents, and 42% are back injuries. Only meat products processing and motor vehicle equipment manufacturing industries rank higher.

In September, OSHA began offering free, comprehensive safety and health seminars, specifically designed for nursing home employers in seven states: Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Assisting the agency in the outreach effort are the Service Employees International Union and the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. The seminars will address potential nursing home hazards, including back injuries from incorrect or strenuous lifting of residents; slips and falls; workplace violence; and risks from bloodborne pathogens, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases.

Joseph A. Dear, Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, described cases where nursing home employers implemented safety and health measures and achieved dramatic results. "In one case, an employer's workers' compensation costs dropped from $750,000 per year to $184,000 after implementing a program to handle residents safely," Dear said. "Many hazards can be eliminated through simple, commonsense measures or low-cost equipment, for example, for lifting patients."

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