

# **A Modest Proposal: It's Time for a Paradigm Shift in How we Treat Safety in the US**

**John N. Zey, CIH, EdD, FAIHA  
Emeriti Professor - Safety Sciences Programs  
University Central Missouri**

# Acknowledgements

- **My thanks to all the following:**
  - From my NIOSH Days - former supervisors who made questionable decisions
  - From my UCM days – a few colleagues/supervisors who did questionable things & students who attempted to cheat in my classes
  - Wayne Schenk & Leigh Ann Blunt for reviewing this Power Point show

# Presentation Topics

- The Problem
- A bit of JN Zey History
- Examples of Questionable Actions
- Do we really need a paradigm shift in our thinking about OSH?
- Other Stuff

# The Problem

- Our Nation's leaders do not respect safety as much as other OSHE Disciplines
- How can Dr. Zey make such a bold statement?
  - He has 3 college degrees!
  - Because he pays attention to people and has for most of his 67+ years
  - He is smarter than he looks



# Some Background on John N. Zey

- Born in 1952 on a farm in central Missouri
- 13 siblings but only 12 classmates in Senior class at Prairie Home School, Prairie Home, MO
- Poor – poorer than the Walton's
- Parents believed in some old sayings
  - “Spare the rod and spoil the child”



John & Carol Beth Zey, circa 1956

# Some Background on John N. Zey

## ■ Personal characteristics:

- Not too bright
- Occasional bouts of halitosis
- Believes in the old adage, Truth, Justice & the American Way
- JNZ, assumed people not poor - on welfare -  
were
  - Smarter, more Honest, more Ethical

# Some Background on John N. Zey

- Parents taught their 14 kids – you have to work for what you want
- John N. Zey left Prairie Home, MO & CMSU afraid that he would be not be considered a good employee due to his lack of skills
- My ethics at the time was and remains the “Golden Rule”

# A Golden Rule Refresher

- What is the golden rule?
  - “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!”
- Some modified versions of the Golden Rule
  - Do unto others and then run like heck!
  - He/she who has the gold makes the rules

# Little Johnnie Learns a Hard Lesson

- **Little Johnnie Gets A Rude Awakening**
  - Some people have never read the golden rule
  - Some people have read it, but assumed it was meant for others!
  - Some people cannot read

# Questionable Action: A Bold Statement

- Guest speaker gave DSHEFS Seminar
- Topic was Bogus IH degrees
- Mentioned some “universities that would sell you an IH degree”
- Then he mentioned CMSU!
  - I bet some of the audience will be interested in this one!

# Questionable Action: A Bold Statement

- He then stated,...
  - While CMSU is not a diploma mill, if I had gone to that easy IH program (CMSU) instead of the difficult IH program I am in, I could have 2 MS degrees by now!
- I was shocked & looking for a place to hide
- The other 40 people in the audience knew I graduated from CMSU/UCM

# Questionable Action: A Bold Statement

- After the speaker was finished I asked him on what he based his opinions about the CMSU MS-IH program?
- I don't know anything myself but I have heard negative comments from other people!
- I was shocked by bold statements made in public, that was based on hear-say



# Questionable Action: A Bold Statement

- At the time of the DSHEFS seminar and those x-rated statements
  - 11 of 56 Certified Industrial Hygienists (CIH) in NIOSH were UCM Safety Science MS-IH alumni!
  - 25-30% of the technical committees of AIHA and ACGIH has UCM alumni as members
  - My dissertation research revealed  $\sim 1/2$  of the alumni who graduated with an MS-IH were certified as CIH

# Questionable Action: NIOSH TPG Review

## NIOSH MS-IH Program Review

- Program submits training grant application
- My last 4 years of work in NIOSH was in the NIOSH's Training Grants Branch 1992 - 1996
- For first time TPG applications NIOSH team visited program for ~1.5 days
- NIOSH team stays together, did not visit any labs
- Starting about 2007, all TPGs for continuation reviews were done by a panel of paid external reviewers in Cincinnati or Atlanta with no site visits

# Questionable Practices NIOSH Reviews

- Rather, the academic programs going through review for a continuation of their grant are reviewed by an external panel
- NIOSH would not tell the program faculty who reviewed their program's application
- There was no mechanism for feedback to NIOSH
- In one sense there was no accountability for the paid NIOSH panel members

# Example of Questionable Action

- In 2002 - John Zey submits a NIOSH TPG application for the UCM MS-IH program,
- We had a TPG for both MS-IH & MS Safety in mid 1970s.
- After an initial NIOSH site visit on Campus, the TPG is approved
- The UCM MS-IH program TPG is reapproved 2 times
- 2009 NIOSH stops funding UCM's MS-IH TPG after a panel of unnamed external reviewers made some false comments in their review

# Questionable Action: NIOSH TPG Review

- In addition, our MS-IH program was viewed as so bad by the panel
  - The panel did not give Safety Sciences' application a score
- Lets look closer at some of the comments the panel of NIOSH secret reviewers made in the UCM MH-IH renewal application

# Review Comments from NIOSH Panel

## NIOSH Review of Safety Sciences MS-IH TPG

- Examples of comments written in NIOSH panel review reports
  - John Zey worked for OSHA for 20 years
  - My response – No, John Zey worked for NIOSH for 20 years
    - Aside: If your paid secret panel reviewers can't read a 2-page resume and remember the information – they should be fired

# Review Comments From NIOSH Panel

## Examples of comments from External Panel reviewers

- This program reports that about 50% of their MS-IH alumni are certified, that is a low percentage
- My Response
  - We were one of the first IH programs to report this type of data
  - Is NIOSH acting ethically in this situation?
- NIOSH did not have a feedback mechanism for programs that are reviewed!

# Review Comments From NIOSH Panel

- These Faculty (i.e., Safety Sciences) cannot be expected to teach research as they have minimal research experience
- My response;
  - Dr. Alice Greife's paper was selected for the NIOSH Alice Hamilton award, for the best published scientific paper produced by a NIOSH researcher in 1988
  - Greife, Zey & other UCM Alumni worked on many research studies NIOSH conducted
  - In 2008 I had about 80 pubs, in 2020 I have 100 pubs
  - Among NIOSH alumni (from UCM) Alice Greife, Wayne Sanderson, Paul Hewitt, Greg Kuhlman, Jeff Bryant, John Zey.



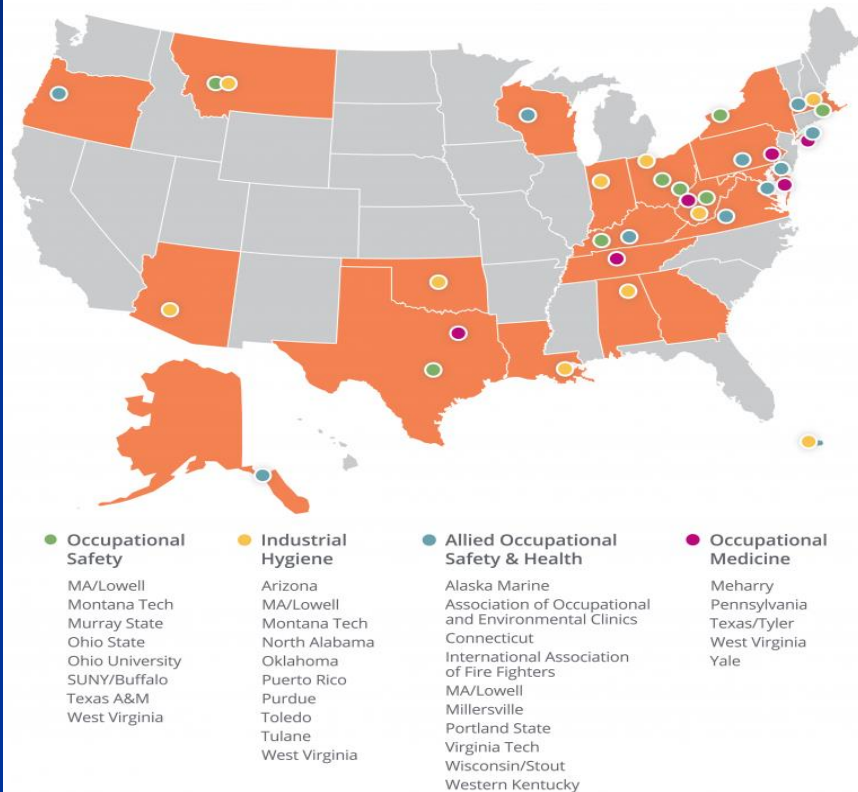
# Problems: Little Known facts

- NIOSH has increased their ERC total from 12 to 18.
- Zey - they did not need any more than 12
- ~1977, NIOSH originally set up the ERC's with seed money to get them started

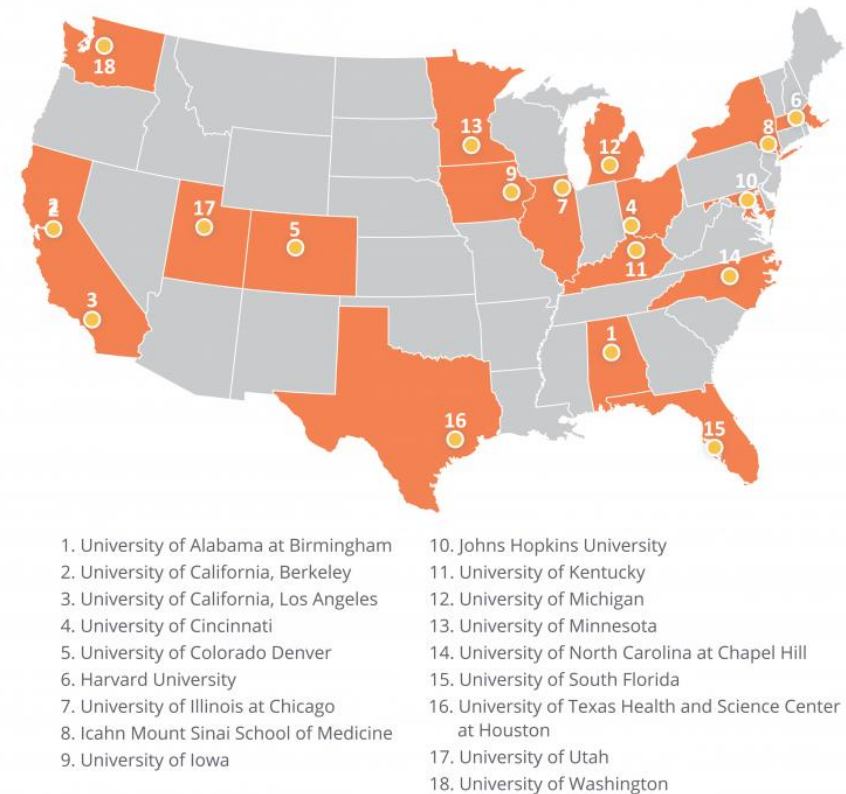


# Where are the NIOSH Training Grant Funds Going?

NIOSH Training Project Grants by Discipline



NIOSH Education and Research Centers



Most of the money goes to ERC's

# Total NIOSH Training Grant Funds; FY-18

Type	Amount	% of Total
Research & Career Development Grants	\$16,575,147	18%
Small Business Innovation Research	\$1,841,700	2%
Multidisciplinary Centers	59,107,157	64%
Specialty Training Programs	5,470,466	6%
Cooperative Research Agreements	9,157,411	10%
Total	92,151,511	\$100

# Little Known facts

- While NIOSH has increased funding of ERCs, and cut some TPG's the nation's on-the-job fatality rate has leveled off and then started to rise (Manuele 2014 & 2020)
- NIOSH has reduced the # of funded safety practitioner programs while increasing the # of ERC and other programs to ERC's
  - **Dr. Zey believes there is a connection!**

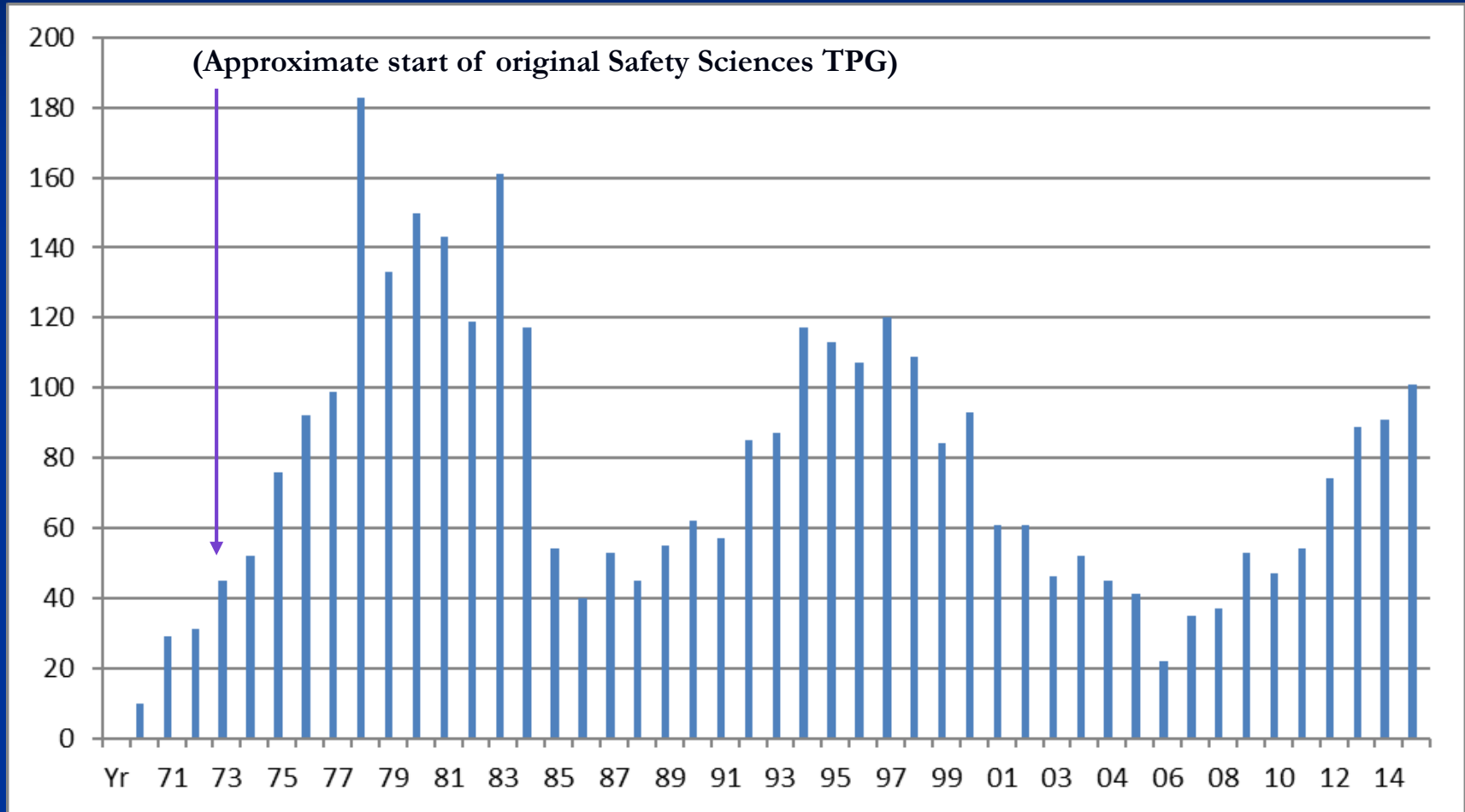
## Little Known facts

- Under the OSH Act, NIOSH is responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of OSH professionals
- NIOSH reported about 15 years ago that the nation will have a significant shortage of OSH professionals
- How did this shortage occur?
  - **NIOSH has not done their job in this regard**
  - **NIOSH rarely hires practitioners to help them plan their studies**
  - **Zey – This suggests NIOSH views researchers, and health Professionals as more important than safety professionals**

# Little Known facts

- In April 1971 after NIOSH was created from BOSH, the training division funded small grants (called TPGs) to various OSH programs
- Lots of programs were funded
  - UCM was funded for both IH and Safety
  - Let's see what happened to Safety Sciences' graduation numbers after getting NIOSH funding!

# Yearly Number of Safety Sciences OSH Graduates





# Comparing ABET & NIOSH Renewal Reviews

<b>Program Review Characteristics</b>	<b>ABET</b>	<b>NIOSH</b>
<b>Programs reviewers are identified to the program</b>	<b>Yes, can recuse them</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Reviewers are trained by Organization</b>	<b>Extensive</b>	<b>Minimal</b>
<b>Team Routine During Visit</b>	<b>Team splits up and looks at lots of stuff, including labs</b>	<b>Team stays together, does not look at labs</b>
<b>Reviewers sign conflict of interest forms</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Organization Has a Formal Feedback Mechanism</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>



# Paradigm Shift?

- Does the nation Really Need a Paradigm Shift in how Safety is viewed?
- J Zey's 3 Responses
  - Yes!
  - Yes, Yes!!
  - & Oh My Yess!!!

# How to Fix Problem: Nation

- Problem - the Nation does not realize the significance of Safety
- OSH needs to get more public awareness of the impact of safety
- Get OSH professionals to visit schools to present on safety & recruit, and/or
  - National Advertising
  - Perhaps a movie on Triangle Shirtwaist Disaster, Hawks Nest, Radium Girls, Bronchiolitis Obliterans (popcorn Lung)
  - Get some publicity – local newspaper, NPR, etc.

# How to Fix Problem: Nation

- Teach Safety in all schools
  - **K – 12 & Higher Ed**
- Reason, in the US we teach science, math, history, and English at all levels of education
- Safety is rarely taught in schools
  - **A member of the HLC for UCM told Dr. Zey Safety was not a suitable general studies topic**
  - **Former UCM Dean told Dr. Blunt that Safety was not a suitable general studies topic**

# How to Fix Problem: Nation

- Fatalities from accidents
  - Annual Deaths from accidents in US.
  - ~160,000
  - At work ~4,500
    - Thus, away from work ~155,000
- This data suggests safety is a suitable general studies (GS) topic for universities
- Let's replace one of the other GS required courses with a course like Safe2010

# How to Fix Problem: Nation

- Convene national workshop on Safety
  - This was done in ~1964 (Lyndon Johnson)
  - It was an of the impetuses for the OSH Act
  - Workshop was held due to concerns over increasing rates of fatalities and serious injuries in the work place
  - Occupational diseases was not the primary impetus for the workshop
- Explain to NIOSH who Francis Perkins was and her impact to OSH

# How to Fix Problem - NIOSH

- Establish an oversight committee of OSH practitioners with clout who can stand up to high level leaders
  - Members should not be getting money from NIOSH
- Replace some researchers with OSH practitioners &
  - Send some of their researchers into real world to work

# How to Fix Problem – NIOSH

Restrict NIOSH Director to one 6-yr term

Both Dr Millar and Dr Howard got reappointed to 2<sup>nd</sup> 6-year terms

Leadership theory suggests leaders should move on after 6-7 years

Flush about 1/3 of NIOSH researchers, physicians, and epi personnel to the real world

# Important Events

In closing I need to mention other important issues

- 1<sup>st</sup> Safety Sciences **Fund Raiser**
- Yes, **Fund Raiser!**
  - The bottom line is Safety Sciences has initiated a fund raiser as they need support and ...
  - ...if you want to see safety sciences remain among the nations best OSH academic practitioner programs – help us out.
  - If you graduated from another university help that OSH program out



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Important issue

### MCASE Safety Olympics for OSH Students

- Idea originated at UCM – Safety Sciences
- MCASE picked it up and we will have out third annual Safety Olympics this April



Safety Science Safety Olympics Team 2018



Judges: both UCM Alumni - 2018 Safety Olympics

# MCASE Safety Olympics

2018 & 2019 Olympics held at Pitt State U

2020 Safety Olympics will be held at U of Central Ok

2021 Safety Olympics will be held at UCM



Safety Science Student Team in Safety Poster Event  
(2018)



Students & Faculty in Hazard Recognition Event  
lab (2018)

# Things You Need to Know

- Safety Sciences has re-invented its's self
  - Student numbers are good
  - 1/4 of faculty are international
  - Faculty publish regularly
  - 9 of 11 faculty are certified
  - Faculty are very active in OSP Professional organizations including Emeriti faculty
    - Dr Allen Iske, Dr. John N Zey
  - Safety Sciences faculty beginning to publish books

# Questions?