



NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

Position/Policy Statement

Research and Data Collection Update

The policy position will supersede #137. The National Safety Council initially passed policy position #137 (Research and Data Collection) in 2017. Since that time, evidence is clear of disproportionate negative safety and health burden on minority racial, ethnic and other demographic groups, and additions reflect the need for better data to understand and create solutions for improved outcomes.

POSITION/POLICY:

The mission of the National Safety Council (NSC) is to save lives from the workplace to anyplace. NSC recognizes the important role of research and data in developing effective policies, practices and solutions to reach our mission to eliminate leading causes of preventable death and injury, focusing efforts on the workplace, roadway and impairment. Robust data collection systems help identify shifts in trends and patterns indicating the emergence of new injury issues and concerns. NSC will continue to take a leadership role in conducting research, reviewing and consolidating relevant research and data, and facilitating a collaborative process of work with key stakeholders from academia, government, industry, labor and other entities. Additionally, with increased focus on ensuring that all groups benefit equally from current safety systems as well as new initiatives it is critical that injury data systems include the necessary demographic information and the legal ability to share this information allowing for the appropriate disaggregation and analysis of the data.¹ Currently the lack of data often prevents the calculation of injury or fatality risk by demographic group or the investigation of potential disparities among historically underserved groups. NSC will evaluate ways it can improve data collection for more complete representative data sets. This collaborative work will be focused on helping to gain consensus on safety research priorities, conducting research in priority areas, and translating research into practice.

NSC will also continue to conduct rigorous evaluation and demonstrate how effective research to practice is linked to performance and prevention. Injury prevention research often involves individuals or groups in community, transportation, or workplace settings. The National Safety Council recognizes the need to respect and protect the welfare of research participants and is committed to upholding the highest standards in the ethical conduct of research.

¹ Demographic includes, but is not limited to, age, race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, income, education, and employment.

The NSC recommends that academia, government, industry, labor and other entities consider how they can further contribute to research and data collection. Examples of those contributions include:

- Funding research projects
- Investing in data collection systems and sufficient resources (e.g., staffing and technical software tools) for data analysis and ensure appropriate protection of this data
- Ensuring that data surveillance systems are equitable and inclusive allowing for the ongoing assessment of the impact of safety systems and initiative on all groups while protecting against inadvertent disclosure of identifiable information.
- Expanding the use of technology such as web portals or other platforms to make data accessible for research and program planning
- Participating in improvement of data collection and reporting methodologies
- Serving as subject matter experts
- Developing cross-functional priority research projects
- Providing access to worksite, operations, surveillance, municipal, and other governmental data, including other relevant resources that support research
- Implementing solutions that demonstrate the impact of research to practice
- Disseminating solutions resulting from research
- Improving exposure tracking and full, accurate and timely reporting of injuries and illnesses

In the context of occupational, home and community, and road safety, research and data are crucial to developing solutions that protect the safety and health of people based on causal determinants and effective interventions for prevention. As the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) notes in their brochure titled “The Nation’s Investment in Occupational Safety and Health Research – Research Priorities through Partnerships” (DHHS NIOSH Publication No. 2007-118), data shows that when interventions are based on sound research, injuries and illnesses can be significantly reduced.

To achieve the full potential of research to improve safety, it is essential that data systems allow for disaggregation of data to explore the impact of interventions on all impacted groups, including historically under-represented groups. The Equitable Data Working Group states that, “Equitable data are those that allow for rigorous assessment of the extent to which government programs and policies yield consistently fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals. Equitable data illuminate opportunities for targeted actions that will result in demonstrably improved outcomes for underserved communities.”² These improvements may include the development and understanding of cultural differences to improve safety messaging.

Research leading to the prevention of injuries is of vital importance given that it is a leading cause of death in the United States, and it has ranked as a leading cause of death for over 25 years. Additionally, there is a significant economic burden associated with injuries and deaths. The cost to business, society and families is estimated to be at least \$1,000 billion on an annual basis.³

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/news-updates/2022/04/22/the-release-of-the-equitable-data-working-group-report/>

³ <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/all-injuries/costs/societal-costs/>

Understanding the impact of NSC on eliminating preventable deaths in our lifetime requires valid, regular data gathering, reporting, and analysis. NSC depends on the data collection and research efforts of academia, government, industry and nonprofit partners and others to provide relevant and timely research and data. Examples of these databases are not confined to any single strategic initiative, but rather cut across the entire NSC mission. These include:

- Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) – This Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) survey uses multiple sources to identify, verify, and profile fatal worker injuries. Information about each workplace fatal injury—occupation and other worker characteristics, equipment involved, and circumstances of the event—is obtained by cross-referencing the source records, such as death certificates, workers' compensation reports, and Federal and State agency administrative reports. These data are used by safety and health professionals, including NSC subject matter experts, government affairs and *Injury Facts*.
- Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) – This nationwide census conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) provides Congress and the public with annual data regarding fatal injuries suffered in motor vehicle traffic crashes, including tracking data on distracted and teen driving crashes. Staff across the NSC rely on data from the FARS system.
- National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drugged Driving (NRS) – This NHTSA survey historically collected voluntary samples from drivers to identify which percentage of the population was using alcohol and drugs behind the wheel. Cancelled after four decades due to recent pressure from Congress over privacy concerns, this survey provided important information for NSC efforts on impaired driving, prescription drug overdose, and other risky driving behaviors.
- National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) – This Centers for Disease Control (CDC) database provides 42 states and communities with an understanding of violent deaths. These include homicides, suicides, child maltreatment, unintentional firearm discharge, and other causes of violent death. NSC Safe Communities, as well as *Injury Facts*, rely on data included in this system. Funding is not available to expand data collection to all 50 states.
- Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII) – This BLS survey collects data on non-fatal injuries and illnesses from a sample of employers each calendar year and is designed to provide an estimate of the number and frequency rate of work-related injuries and illnesses. For more serious cases that involve one or more days away from work, it also provides a description of the injury or illness circumstances as well as the characteristics of the affected workers. This data is used by NSC workplace consultants, subject matter experts, and *Injury Facts*.

Additionally, to ensure we have the best data for injury and illness countermeasures, NSC plans to look for ways to improve data collection so that it is more representative of all people who suffer harm. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Requiring racial and ethnicity data reporting on OSHA injury logs,
- Requiring racial and ethnicity data on BLS reporting injury rates,
- Reporting race and ethnic origin for all individuals involved in crashes,
- Reporting crash exposure data such as number of licensed drivers by race and ethnic origin, and

- Updating Office of Management and Budget directives on data collected to allow for the disaggregation of data.
- Advocating for strong data governance practices to prevent the misuse of sensitive information and to insure confidentiality.

NSC supports these and other data sources and will advocate for this type of research and data collection. NSC shall continue to develop its own resources to support research and data collection as well as develop more effective ways to communicate the results and applications of such research and data analysis.

This position statement reflects the opinions of the National Safety Council but not necessarily those of each member organization.

Adopted by the National Safety Council, October 2022