

# Poor workplace nutrition hits workers' health and productivity



Target Logistics Stanley Complex, North Dakota.

Workers at remote oil, gas and mining sites face multiple challenges. Fatigue in the forms of exhaustion, weakness or sleepiness, for example, is the leading cause of worker-initiated accidents. As such, quality food and rest are necessary solutions to workforce health and productivity.

One wrong switch, one loose bolt, one missed safety check, and the entire system can blow. Workers' lives are at stake. And, depending on the severity of the accident, the life of the entire community is threatened, too, as well as the very life of the company and the broader business climate for years to come. Years of marketing, branding and social responsibility can evaporate overnight.

You can't blame the weather or bad luck. Approximately 90 percent of workplace accidents are caused by human error, whether originating in poor managerial decisions – months and miles away from the site of the accident, or worker errors that have immediate and devastating effects. And the number-one cause of worker-initiated accidents is fatigue in its various forms, such as exhaustion, weakness or sleepiness.

Consider, for instance, that obese workers are twice as likely to miss work and that low iron levels are associated with weakness, sluggishness and lack of coordination. It's best to mitigate these problems at work.

Poor diet can result in less productivity and amplify workplace issues like low morale, high stress and lack of trust.

For these reasons, health and science writer Christopher Wanjek – working with Target Logistics – wrote a white paper titled, *“Workforce Housing and Feeding Solutions for Health, Safety, Productivity and Morale.”* It can be downloaded for free from the Target Logistics website, [www.targetlogistics.net](http://www.targetlogistics.net), under the News section.

“Securing food daily quickly becomes a problem. Even if these workers have access to a stove and know how to cook, they will have difficulty obtaining fresh foods, and their meals likely will be basic and nutritionally inadequate for optimal health,” Wanjek explains. “Those living in motels often are forced to eat at the same fast-food restaurant, convenience store or gas station for the duration of their employment. Imagine such an existence, all the while working 12-plus-hour days.”

Comforts can vary but, at the heart of the matter, is the feeling of hominess. Every comfortable bed, soft pillow, warm shower, lively pool room, exercise facility, clean laundry facility, and so on will engender loyalty and good morale and reduce the risk of fatigue through the five- to 10-day rotation of 10- to 12-hour shifts often expected from workers.

The choice between living out of a motel, living in a trailer (or car), or living in high-quality all-inclusive temporary housing is an easy choice to make. And among all the remote operations that do offer food and shelter, the choice





between a "one-star" and "four-star" accommodation also is easy to make. Workers talk, and word will spread about which companies offer the best working conditions.

"Investments in feeding and wellness programs routinely yield profits in terms of higher productivity, fewer accidents, reduced absenteeism and less turnover," Wanjek writes. "Consider that Husky Injection Molding Systems, Ltd., in Bolton, Ontario, has reported U.S.\$6.8-million in yearly savings from a U.S.\$2.5-million investment in wellness. Coors Brewing Company has reported a \$6.15-million productivity gain for every \$1 invested in food and fitness." Likewise, Travelers reports a \$3.40 gain for \$1 invested in nutrition and recreation and DuPont reports a \$2.05 gain for \$1 invested in nutrition and recreation.

"Target Logistics has always believed strongly in the powerful link between proper nutrition and the improved productivity of a workforce. Indeed, the Target Logistics Economics of Comfort® platform proves that," says spokesman Randy Pruett. "Ultimately, it is ironic that industries so focused on producing high-quality fuel can overlook the high-quality fuel needed to power workers." ▶



*Bear Paw Lodge, North Dakota.*