2021 SASPA Safety Survey Highlights

The 2021 State Agency Safety Professionals Alliance (SASPA) Safety Survey was open for six weeks during January and February. The survey was provided to all state agencies including higher education institutions.

The information below summarizes statewide responses to the survey. This year, we are including an analysis of responses from employees who identified as primarily teleworking for the last 12 months and those who identified as primarily working in an office, building, field, etc. We encourage you to analyze your agency-specific reports to identify trends, areas of success and areas needing improvement.

At the end of this report, there are suggestions for managers, supervisors and safety committees about how to utilize these survey results and a list of safety resources.

Survey Participation

Nearly 28,000 employees from more than 120 organizations responded to the survey, resulting in a 3% increase over 2020. Approximately 67% of the respondents identified as primarily teleworking for the last 12 months and 33% identified as primarily working in an office, building, field, etc. (non-teleworkers).

Commonly identified potential safety hazards

This section analyzes potential safety hazards in three separate groups and compares the responses of all three groups to the responses of all 2020 Safety Survey respondents.

- The first group is all respondents who identified as primarily teleworking during the last 12 months (teleworkers).
- The second group is all respondents who identified as primarily working in an office, building, or the field during the last 12 months (non-teleworkers).
- The third group is all respondents who took the survey in 2021 (teleworkers and non-teleworkers combined).
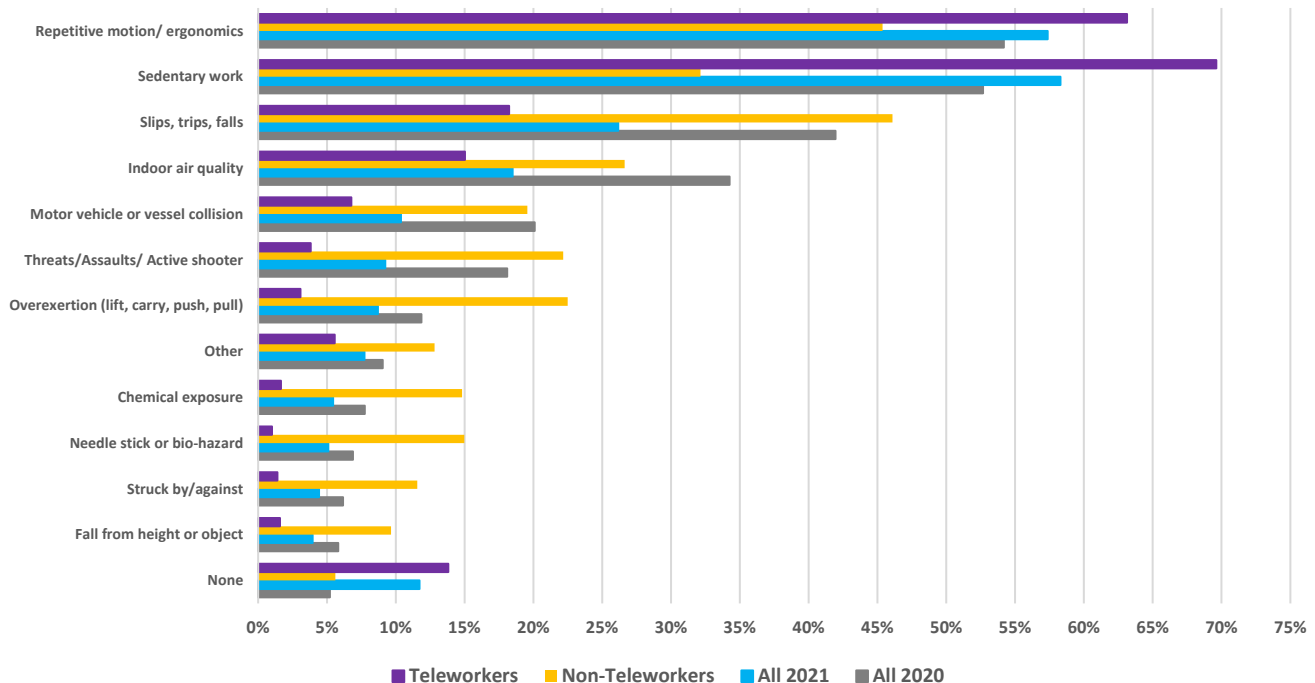
Teleworkers

The results indicate that teleworkers are significantly more concerned about repetitive motion, ergonomics and sedentary work than non-teleworkers. In fact, this group is more concerned about this hazard than the sum of all survey respondents from either 2020 or 2021.

This group is significantly less concerned with slips, trips, and falls, indoor air quality, motor vehicle accidents, and threats, assaults or active shooters than non-teleworkers.

In addition, 13.81% of teleworkers checked "none," indicating that they encounter no potential safety hazards in their workplace. Alone, more respondents in this group checked "none" than the sum of all survey respondents from either 2020 or 2021.

Non-teleworkers

The results indicate that non-teleworkers are significantly more concerned about slips, trips and falls, indoor air quality, threats, assaults, active shooters and overexertion than teleworkers. Alone, they are more concerned about these hazards than the sum of all survey respondents from either 2020 or 2021.

This group is less concerned about repetitive motion, ergonomics and sedentary work than teleworkers. Alone, they are less concerned about these hazards than the sum of all survey respondents from either 2020 or 2021.

More than 2100 respondents offered additional information about the above hazards and about other potential hazards, including:
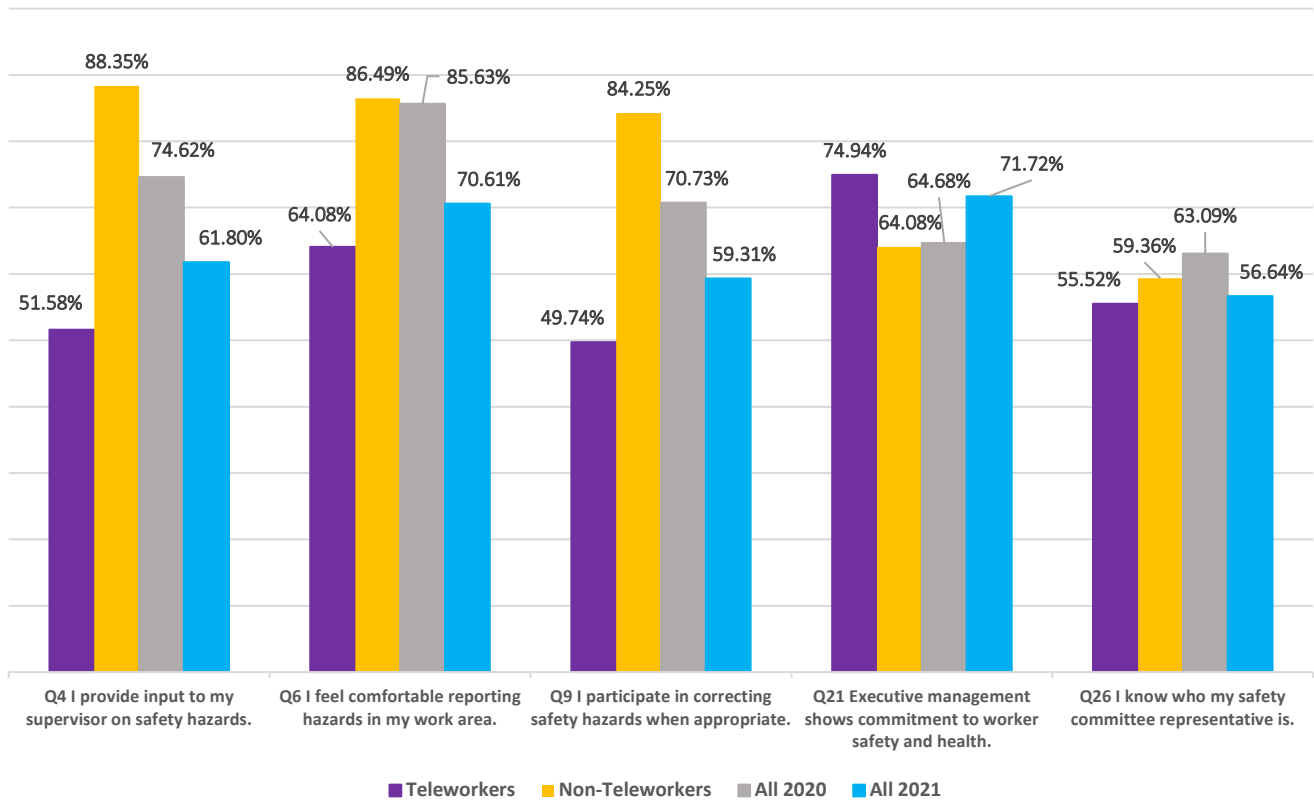
- COVID-19
- Assaults, injuries, verbal abuse by clients/customers/students
- Overwork (stress, overtime, understaffing, lack of training, distractions, fatigue)
- Workplace conditions (too hot/cold; air quality, including lack of ventilation, dust, fragrances and second-hand smoke; unsanitary conditions; old carpets; mold/mildew; rodents/pests; water quality; inadequate lighting and excessive noise).
- Workplace security (solitary work site or hours, building security, neighborhood concerns, vandalism, lack of cell service).

Other Questions with Notable Changes

This section analyzes questions with notable changes in three separate groups and compares the responses of all three groups to the responses of all 2020 Safety Survey respondents.

- The first group is all respondents who identified as primarily teleworking during the last 12 months (teleworkers).
- The second group is all respondents who identified as primarily working in an office, building, or the field during the last 12 months (non-teleworkers).
- The third group is all respondents who took the survey in 2021 (teleworkers and non-teleworkers combined).

The chart on the next page depicts data from the questions with notable changes. The numbers reflect percentage of positive responses (strongly agree or agree).

Chart with survey questions Q4, Q6, Q9, Q21, Q26 comparing Teleworkers, Non-Teleworkers, All 2020, and All 2021.

Question	Teleworkers	Non-Teleworkers	All 2020	All 2021
Q4 I provide input to my supervisor on safety hazards.	51.58%	88.35%	74.62%	61.80%
Q6 I feel comfortable reporting hazards in my work area.	64.08%	86.49%	85.63%	70.61%
Q9 I participate in correcting safety hazards when appropriate.	49.74%	84.25%	70.73%	59.31%
Q21 Executive management shows commitment to worker safety and health.	74.94%	64.08%	64.68%	71.72%
Q26 I know who my safety committee representative is.	55.52%	59.36%	63.09%	56.64%

Legend: Teleworkers, Non-Teleworkers, All 2020, All 2021

Teleworkers

The results indicate teleworkers are less comfortable about reporting hazards in their work area than non-teleworkers and are less likely than non-teleworkers to provide input to their supervisors about hazards or to participate in correcting hazards when appropriate.

Teleworkers were more positive about executive management's commitment to workers' safety and health than non-teleworkers. In fact, they were more positive than the sum of all survey respondents from either 2020 or 2021.

Non-teleworkers

Non-teleworker responses indicate they are more likely to provide input to their supervisors about safety hazards than teleworkers. Alone, they are more likely than the sum of all survey respondents from either 2020 or 2021.

They are more comfortable about reporting hazards in their work area and are more likely to participate in correcting hazards than teleworkers.

They are less positive than teleworkers that executive management shows a commitment to workers' safety and health; this does not appear to be a significant change from last year.

All respondents

Both teleworkers and non-teleworkers are less positive this year about knowing who their safety representative is than they were last year.

Employees' suggestions for improvement

More than 1900 employees offered suggestions for improved safety. While there were many write-in suggestions, the top five categories are:

COVID protocols/information: Employees are concerned about COVID-19 protocols not being followed in workplaces, making them feel unsafe. Some suggested that they were not provided the proper COVID-19 PPE to perform their job safely, while others felt there was a lack of information altogether about COVID-19 from their agencies. In addition, there were some positive comments about how agencies were handling COVID-19.

Management support of safety: Responses to multiple-choice questions indicate that 71-79% of employees feel that their executive management and supervisors demonstrate a commitment to worker safety, and some write-in responses elaborated on this positive feedback. However, some write-in responses describe an indifference toward worker safety. Suggestions include:

- Fund safety and fix hazards despite cost.
- Respond to safety concerns, including the concerns raised in safety surveys.
- Enforce COVID-19 agency protocols.
- Spend more time with staff who are actually doing the work to understand their needs better.

Ergonomic support for home offices: While there were some positive comments about agencies being supportive with home ergonomics, there were many employees asking for assistance. The most common suggestions are:

- Allow employees to take home their ergonomic equipment from work, to include sit/stand workstations, chairs, headsets, etc.
- Perform ergonomic assessments to assist employees with adjusting their equipment or coming up with ideas to work safely from home.

Safety leadership, committees and communication: Several employees indicated their safety office and safety committees are effective and responsive. However, some write-in responses describe a lack of leadership and communication. Suggestions include:

- Improve safety-related communication so that employees know who their safety representatives are and know when hazards are fixed.
- Safety office employees need to be more visible; visit employees who work in the field to see first-hand the issues they face.
- Provide new employees with training and location of safety equipment.

Safety training and drills: Several employees indicated their safety office and safety committees are effective in providing the proper amount of training. However, some write-in responses describe a lack of training, especially during this last year. Suggestions include:

- For those still working in the office, provide refresher training for responding to emergencies.
- Many employees indicated their training is out-of-date and many said that their certifications have expired.

How can you use this information?

Your agency's results might differ from the statewide results. Review the agency-specific results that have been provided to you for trends and concerns. If you need additional reports, contact Leslie Atkinson at leslie.atkinson@des.wa.gov.

The following pages contain suggestions for improving an agency's safety culture; some might be particularly helpful for your agency. A note following each suggestion (for example, "Q27") indicates which survey question(s) could benefit from the suggested action.

Ideas for improving the safety culture in agencies

For Directors/Commissioners

Recognize the safety committee(s) by:
1. Sending a hand written thank you note to members or the chair (Q21), or
2. Inviting the safety committee to a leadership team meeting for introductions and to thank them for their commitment to safety and service (Q21), or
3. Stopping in at the beginning of a safety committee meeting to say hello and thank you. (Q21)
4. Sending an all staff communication on the importance or safety committees, their roles, responsibilities, and authority. (Q7, 8, 21, 26, 27)
5. Hold deputy or assistant directors accountable for safety in their areas by:
    a. Requiring regular reporting on hazards reported and what was done to address the hazard (Q3, 6, 7, 10), or
    b. Requiring safety action plans for areas with high injury rates and regular reporting on status. (Q2, 4, 6, 29)
    c. Requiring at least one safety measure (using a leading indicator) in the divisional strategic plan. (Q8, 21,29)
    d. Including a brief relevant safety message in communications to all staff. (Q21, 25)
    e. Supporting, promoting, and participating in agency safety initiatives/campaigns. (Q21,25)

For Managers/Supervisors

1. Allow staff the time to participate in the safety committee and/or safety committee activities. (Q3, 8, 23, 27)
2. Invite a safety committee member to provide a brief report on safety committee activities at a staff meeting. (Q23, 25, 26, 27)
3. Review agency safety policies or programs on a regular basis with staff. (Q17, 23)
4. Follow up to make sure reported hazards or safety concerns have been addressed. (Q6, 7, 8, 10)
5. Approve training requests for safety training, even though the training is not required for the job (e.g. First Aid/CPR, Defensive Driving, active threat). (Q17, 23)
6. Encourage employees to report near misses (close calls) as well as incidents. (Q3, 4, 5, 6)
7. Support, promote, and participate in agency safety initiatives/campaigns. (Q23)
8. Provide safety information in new employee orientations. (Q11,12,14,15, 26)

For Safety Committees

Let employees know who you are by:

1. Posting pictures (group or individual) and names of members on the safety bulletin board. (Q26)
2. Requesting to attend staff meetings to provide a brief update on safety committee activities. (Q26,27)
3. Inviting co-workers as guests to your safety committee meetings. (Q26, 27)
4. When safety committee members are elected or appointed, send a communication out to let everyone know who they are. (Q26)
5. Perform safety walkabouts
    a. Advise employees in advance of the date and time of the walkabout (walkabouts are not "gotchas" they are teaching moments or training). (Q2, 29)

b. Let employees know the types of hazards you are looking for, for example: (Q2, 26, 27, 29)
   i. Cord management to prevent tripping hazards.
   ii. Extension cords or several surge protectors plugged into each other.
   iii. Clear areas under desks or tables for drop, cover, & hold in the event of an earthquake.
   iv. Heavy items on top shelves that can lead to injury when someone reaches for the item or when the item falls off during an earthquake.
c. During the walkabout (Q2, 6, 7, 26)
   i. Introduce yourself as a safety committee member.
   ii. Ask employees if they have any safety concerns (if they do, follow up on them and report back to the employee).
   iii. Remind employees that they can contact safety committee members at any time with safety concerns.
6. Work with supervisors to address hazards found during the walkabout. (Q3, 8, 23, 27)
7. When employees share safety concerns with the committee or report hazards to the committee, respond to the employee and keep everyone in the loop on the steps that are being taken to address the hazard. (Q8, 10, 27)

Thank you for your commitment to making safety a priority!

Appendix

Additional Resources for Safety Information

Safety and Health Leadership Resources and Articles

1. [Occupational Safety and Health Administration Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs](#)
2. [Occupational Health & Safety Magazine](#)
3. [American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE)](#)
4. [National Safety Council Safety and Health Magazine](#)

Safety Committee Training Resources:

1. [Safety Committees and Meetings](#)
2. [Health and Safety Committee Training Curriculum](#)
3. [Other L&I safety and health workshops](#)

L&I Resources for Ergonomics and Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorder (WMSD)

1. [Office Ergonomics](#)
2. [Ergonomics for Home Offices](#)
3. [Work from Home Ergonomics Self-Assessment](#)
4. [Work from home options](#)
5. [Setting up a safe and healthy workspace for teleworking](#)
6. [Sit-Stand Computer Workstations, Help for Employees](#)
7. [Sit-Stand Computer Workstations, Help for Employers](#)
8. [A Five Step Process for Finding Sprain and Strain Hazards in Your Workplace](#)
9. [Ergonomics for Drivers](#)
10. [Ergonomics Awareness Education for Employees and Supervisors](#)
11. [Ergonomics Guidelines for Nursing Homes](#)
12. [How to Control Repetitive Hand and Wrist Tasks](#)
13. [Preventing Overexertion Injuries](#)
14. [Preventing Sprains and Strains in the Warehouse](#)
15. [Request a DOSH Consultation for safety training, workplace assessment or ergonomic assistance](#)