



NIOSH director John Howard, MD routinely announces top priorities for NIOSH research and action in the upcoming year. In 2017, due to increased energy production and development of new techniques such as hydraulic fracturing, health and safety for the Oil and Gas industry topped the list.

Size of the Oil & Gas workforce has increased, including those involved in drilling and servicing wells, and workers in refineries and preparing oil and gas for shipment. NIOSH scientists are conducting research to characterize and eliminate the risks faced by workers to respirable crystalline silica, and volatile organic compounds including naphthalene, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, and other hazards. Because some of these chemical compounds can be ototoxic (poisonous to the ear), use of respirators and hearing protection is critical to hearing loss prevention as well as general worker safety.

To learn more:

[Ototoxic Chemicals](#), CavCom *SoundBytes*

[Oil & Gas: Health Concerns in Flowback Operations](#), CavCom *SoundBytes*

[Occupational Health Issues in the USA](#), NIOSH Science Blog, January 10, 2017

[NIOSH Oil and Gas Program](#)