

Western Occupational & Environmental Medical Association



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# WOEMA Window

## October 2025

### President's Address

Well another year has almost gone. We had a fabulous experience at the WOEMA WOHC 2025 conference in Salt Lake City. Although well attended I wish all of you could have been there. It was great content, great engagement, and a great setting. Many thanks again to all who contributed their time and effort, as well as, financial support. We had a great Chair, Dr. Eric Wood, and a fantastic planning committee team. For those of you who were not able to be with us, we are sharing the WOEMA Presidential address in this month's newsletter. You should make plans now to attend the upcoming 2026 WOHC to be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, September 24-26, 2026. The venue has been carefully selected just for YOU, and is sure to delight all. The exciting content is already being planned and NOT TO BE MISSED! Thank Dr. Alya Kahn and Dr. Max Clark for your excellent choices. [Here is the WOHC 2025 Presidential address.](#)

Rosalie Banasiak, MD, FACOEM  
WOEMA President

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# Occupational Medicine Professionals Gather in Salt Lake City for a Dynamic WOHC 2025

The 2025 Western Occupational Health Conference (WOHC), chaired by **Dr. Eric Wood**, took place September 25–27 in Salt Lake City, Utah, bringing together 156 occupational and environmental medicine professionals for three days of education, collaboration, and inspiration.

The conference opened with a pre-course on **Musculoskeletal Ultrasound**, led by Dr. Matthew Compton, providing hands-on training. Attendees also participated in off-site learning experiences, which included highly enjoyable site visits to the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints manufacturing facilities** and the **U.S. Olympic Training Center**.

Friday's sessions featured a wide range of engaging topics, beginning with **Dr. Kevin Perry's** Keynote Lecture on *The Great Salt Lake and Dust-Related Health Concerns*, educating the audience on drying impact on the west including significance loss of habitat for majority of migratory bird populations in western North America, and airborne emissions of toxic metals from exposed sediment. This was followed by **Dr. Quang Nguyen's** insightful talk, *Galileo Died of Old Age – The Myth of the Scientific Hero*. **Dr. Tommaso Lenzi** presented advancements in robotics and rehabilitation, while **Dr. Scott Stoll** explored the role of nutrition and lifestyle in recovery and healing. Additional highlights included a case-based session on occupational and environmental lung disease led by **Drs. Sheiphali Gandhi and Karolyn Viragh**, updates to the **ACOEM Clinical Practice Guidelines** presented by **Dr. Kurt Hegmann**, and a comprehensive overview of **concussion diagnosis and treatment** from **Dr. Diana Kraemer**. The day concluded with the **Business Meeting and Awards Ceremony**, featuring the **Rutherford T. Johnstone Lecture** delivered by **Dr. Steve Frangos**, who shared his talk "From Fighter Jets to Oil Rigs." Other award winners were **Dr. Jane Fazio** (Anne Searcy Public Service Award), **Dr. Denece Kesler** (Jean Spencer Felton Award), and **Dr. Marc Schenker** (JEDI Award). That evening, attendees gathered for food, drinks, and lively conversation at the **Signature Event** in the beautiful **Oak Room of The Grand America Hotel**, enjoying a memorable evening of connection and celebration.

Saturday's program focused on technology, policy, and clinical practice. **Drs. Rosalie Banasiak and Laura Gillis** delivered the **WOEMA and ACOEM Presidential Addresses**, followed by a session on *Artificial Intelligence: A Primer for the Occupational Medicine Physician*, presented by **Drs. Steven Feinberg, Danny David, Kurt Hegmann, and Hon. Robert Rassp**. The **WOEMA Legislative Committee** then shared recent policy achievements and future priorities, with contributions from **Drs. Robert Blink, Robert Harrison, Robert Orford, Saloomeh Sadaghiani, and Don Schinske**. Afternoon sessions covered *Cancer in Firefighters* (**Dr. Matt Thiese**), *Olympic Village Polyclinic Operations* (**Dr. Stuart Willick**), and *Occupational Dermatology* (**Drs. Stephanie Zone and Nicole Hughes**). The

conference concluded with the **Resident poster contest awards**, a raffle of a Hawai'i timeshare visit donated by **Dr. Saloomeh Sadaghiani** and the ceremonial **Passing of the Gavel** to incoming WOEMA President, **Dr. Alya Khan**. As WOHC 2025 came to a close, 2026 Conference Chair **Dr. Max Clark** unveiled the theme for WOHC 2026 in Honolulu, "*Crossroads of the Pacific*," inspiring excitement for the year ahead.





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## SAVE THE DATE!

### Western Occupational Health Conference (WOHC) 2026

📍 *Alohilani Resort, O'ahu, Hawai'i*

📅 *September 24–26, 2026*

Join us at the Western Occupational Health Conference for an unforgettable gathering of occupational and environmental medicine professionals and thought leaders. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Waikīkī Beach, the Alohilani Resort offers the perfect setting for learning, networking, and rejuvenation with colleagues from around the country and the Pacific Rim. You won't want to miss this opportunity!

Experience world-class education and collaboration where workplace safety, science, and paradise meet.

👉 Mark your calendar — and stay tuned for registration and room block details!

**Check out the video below for a sneak peak!**



🔊 Sound On! You won't want to miss this!



## WOEMA Honors Native American Heritage Month

November is Native American Heritage Month, a time to recognize and honor the enduring contributions, resilience, and leadership of American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and affiliated Island communities. As we celebrate heritage, we also reflect on health, work, and wellness within these communities—and the crucial role of occupational and environmental medicine (OEM) in promoting equity and safety.

Across the United States, an estimated 2.6 million AI/AN workers contribute to our economy, with many employed in higher-risk industries such as construction, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and transportation. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), AI/AN workers are 42% more likely to be employed in a “high-risk” occupation—defined as one with injury and illness rates more than twice the national average—compared with non-Hispanic White workers.

Despite this elevated risk, research into occupational exposures among Indigenous workers remains limited. Few studies explore how workplace hazards interact with chronic health conditions, such as diabetes or asthma, that disproportionately affect Native communities. For example, Alaska-based investigations have identified exposures to petroleum products, military chemicals, and asbestos among AI/AN workers—underscoring the urgent need for prevention and data-driven intervention.

Data and surveillance gaps compound these challenges. The [NIOSH American Indian and Alaska Native Worker Safety and Health Strategic Plan](#) highlights that occupational health data for tribal communities are often incomplete or missing. In some states, including New Mexico, jurisdictional boundaries mean tribal lands fall outside state occupational health oversight, leading to significant undercounting of workplace injuries and illnesses.

For OEM professionals, these realities call for partnership and purpose; collaborating with tribal nations to strengthen data collection, tailor hazard assessments, and design culturally responsive workplace interventions. Surveillance underpins prevention: without accurate information, risk cannot be fully understood or mitigated.

This month, as we honor Native heritage and leadership, WOEMA reaffirms its commitment to advancing equity and safety for all workers—recognizing that protecting health at work is part of preserving community, culture, and future generations.

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### Resources to Learn More

- [NIOSH – American Indian and Alaska Native Worker Safety and Health Strategic Plan](#)
- Association of American Indian Physicians, <https://www.aaip.org/>
- Tribal Epidemiology Centers – Health Equity Initiatives, <https://tribalepicenters.org/>

- Native Wellness Institute, <https://www.nativewellness.com/>
  - National Congress of American Indians – Climate & Health Resources, <https://archive.ncai.org/policy-issues/land-natural-resources/climate-change>
  - New Mexico Department of Health – Tribal Occupational Health Assessment, <https://www.nmhealth.org/data/assessment/>
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## News and Resources

### **New York Times Podcast: The Hidden Victims of America's Wildfires**

The story of one young man who started fighting fires as a teenager and was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer on the eve of his 25th birthday. [Click to listen.](#)

### **Extreme Heat Spurs New Laws Aimed at Protecting Workers Worldwide - The New York Times**

For years, researchers have raised the alarm about the dangers of extreme heat in the workplace. Now, as more workers get sick — and sometimes die — from increasingly intense and frequent heat waves, labor laws are barely keeping up with the new hazards of climate change. [Click to read more.](#)

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### **Risk Assessments for Employees who are Deaf or have Hearing Loss - Occupational Health & Safety**

Tackling physical barriers with practical, inclusive solutions for safer workplaces. [Click to read more.](#)

### **Toxic Fumes Are Leaking Into Airplanes, Sickening Crews and Passengers - Wall Street Journal**

Doctors compare brain effects to concussions in NFL players. A Wall Street Journal investigation shows the problem is getting worse and not much is being done about it. [Click to read more.](#)

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## Newsletter Submissions Welcome!

We'd love to hear from WOEMA Members! Please submit ideas for articles, news items, or suggestions to [amuckley@lutinemanagement.com](mailto:amuckley@lutinemanagement.com).

Potential contributions may include:

- Case studies from your practice
- Research updates
- Professional development opportunities
- Industry news and trends
- Member achievements and announcement

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