

OSHA: New Ways of Working



OSHA's mission is to send every American worker home whole and healthy every day. To meet that challenge, we are focusing on three goals:

- Improving workplace safety and health by reducing injuries, illnesses, and fatalities.*
- Changing workplace culture by increasing employer and employee commitment to improved safety and health.*
- Securing public confidence through excellence in developing and delivering OSHA services.*

To achieve these goals, we've adopted new ways of working. This approach helps us make the most of our resources to achieve the greatest results.

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OS New Ways

Strong Enforcement

A credible enforcement program is a critical component of OSHA's effort to send every worker home whole and healthy. We must be firm. We must be fair. And we must focus our efforts where we can do the most good.

OSHA is tracking the injury and illness experience of about 80,000 workplaces in high-hazard industries to identify trends, pinpoint problems, and target inspections. We've provided feedback to the sites with poor records and encouraged these employers to take steps to improve. Our best advice? Establish an effective safety and health program with assistance from private consultants, workers' compensation insurers, or OSHA's free state-based consultation service.

Each year we will inspect several thousand employers with the highest injury and illness rates—those that are double, triple, or quadruple the private sector average. Those inspections pay off. Not surprisingly, where injuries occur, hazards abound. This site-specific targeting produces four times as many cases involving significant violations and major penalties as our other inspections find.

Creative Partnerships

Inspections alone will never produce safe and healthful working environments at our nation's 6 million worksites. OSHA must establish cooperative relationships with employers and employees to foster voluntary compliance with standards and adoption of a systematic approach to workplace safety and health.

OSHA's premier partnership is the Voluntary Protection Programs. VPP companies demonstrate excellence in safety and health and reap significant savings as a result of their efforts. Together, more than 550 sites in 180 industries partner with OSHA in protecting their workforce and save \$110 million each year because they average 50 percent fewer injuries than their counterparts.

Other partnerships are paying off too, such as our partnership with ConAgra Refrigerated Foods that fosters a safety culture and effective safety and health programs in every plant they own. We also have industry-specific partnerships with steel erectors in Colorado and the roofing industry in Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin. C.A.R.E., Construction Accident Reduction Emphasis, is a construction industry partnership designed to prevent fatalities in Florida.

Each of OSHA's 66 area offices is developing one or more partnerships under OSHA's Strategic Partnership Program. These partnerships focus on safety and health programs and include outreach and training components along with enforcement.

Effective safety and health programs are crucial to preventing injuries, illnesses, and deaths in the workplace. The average company can reduce injuries from 20 to 40 percent by establishing a safety and health program.



Establishing a safe and healthful working environment requires every employer and every worker to make safety and health a top priority. The entire work force—from the CEO to the most recent hire—must recognize that worker safety and health is central to the mission and key to the profitability of the American company.

OSHA's job is to provide the leadership and encouragement to workers and employers to take that responsibility seriously. Our new ways of working include strong enforcement, creative partnerships, expanded outreach and training, and improved rulemaking.



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These programs pay for themselves. Several studies have estimated that safety and health programs save \$4 to \$6 for every dollar invested. Yet, only about 30 percent of U.S. worksites have established them. Our goal is to work through partnerships, outreach, and rulemaking to ensure that every U.S. business has an appropriate, continuing safety and health program to prevent accidents and protect its employees.

Outreach and Training

Most employers want to do the right thing. But they may need help in identifying hazards or finding solutions that fit their workplaces. OSHA is committed to expanding outreach and training to provide as much information and assistance as possible. This is a good investment that will pay measurable dividends for employers and workers alike.

OSHA offers safety and health training and assistance through its Training Institute, its 18 education centers, and free onsite consultation program for small employers. The 25 states or territories with their own OSHA-approved safety and health programs also provide related information and outreach to their constituents.

OSHA offers a broad array of self-help materials to employers and employees through its website at www.osha.gov. Hazard-based brochures, OSHA rules, proposed standards, and links to other helpful sites are all available. In addition, OSHA is producing a series of free interactive “expert advisors” software to help employers identify typical hazards in their industry or provide tailored information to enable them to comply with specific OSHA rules. These computer programs and other outreach information can be found on OSHA’s Internet site.



Improved Rulemaking

The fourth aspect of OSHA’s strategy to reduce injuries, illnesses, and fatalities is improved rulemaking. We need rules that protect workers from today’s hazards and tomorrow’s threats. We need standards backed by the best science available. And we need rules written simply enough for everyone to understand and follow.

OSHA’s two top priorities for new standards are a requirement for employers to adopt safety and health programs and one for ergonomics programs. Safety and health programs form the foundation for systematically addressing hazards in the workplace and focusing attention on worker safety and health. Without a safety and health program, a company’s approach to protecting workers on the job is reduced to a haphazard, hit-or-miss intention to follow the rules, with little effort to find out what rules apply.

Ergonomics programs are the most effective way to reduce the one-third of all serious injuries in the U.S.—more than 600,000 annually—that result from overexertion or repetitive motion. These painful, potentially disabling injuries cost employers from \$15 billion to \$20 billion each year in workers’ compensation costs alone. Add indirect costs, and the yearly total mounts as high as \$60 billion. An extensive review of the scientific literature by the National Academy of Sciences in 1998 found that ergonomics programs are effective in reducing work-related musculoskeletal disorders. OSHA’s standard

will zero in on jobs where the risk of injury is high—production jobs in manufacturing and jobs that involve manual lifting.

OSHA’s new ways of working leverage our resources and multiply our impact. These strategies—strong enforcement, creative partnership, expanded outreach and training, and improved rulemaking—will bring us closer to our goal of providing a safe workplace for every working American.

Improving work environments for all our citizens is not a short-term mission. It’s a long-term proposition. And it requires daily diligence and ongoing commitment in the face of competing priorities for time, energy, and resources.

OSHA will move forward step by step. And we will not stop until every worker goes home whole and healthy every day.

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*These states and territories operate their own OSHA-approved job safety and health programs (Connecticut and New York plans cover public employees only). States with approved programs must have a standard that is identical to, or at least as effective as, the federal standard.

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