



OSHA's Fall 2009 Regulatory Priorities

The Secretary's vision of Good Jobs for Everyone requires a safe and healthy workplace for all workers. OSHA's regulatory program is designed to help workers and employers identify and control hazards in the workplace and prevent injuries, illnesses and fatalities. OSHA's current regulatory program demonstrates a renewed commitment to worker protection.

OSHA's major projects to implement the Secretary's vision are:

Airborne Infectious Diseases

Airborne infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and influenza can be spread from person-to-person. OSHA is interested in protecting the nation's 13 million healthcare workers from airborne infectious diseases. Healthcare-acquired infections are on the rise and there are also increasing levels of drug-resistant microorganisms in healthcare settings. Most current infection control efforts are intended primarily for patient protection and not for worker protection. In March 2010, OSHA intends to publish a Request for Information to help examine how to improve worker protection from exposure to airborne diseases.

Occupational Injury and Illness Recording and Reporting Requirements (Musculoskeletal Disorders)

OSHA is proposing to revise its regulation on Recording and Reporting Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (Recordkeeping) to restore a column on the OSHA 300 Injury and Illness Log that employers will check when recording work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The MSD data from the column will help about 750,000 employers and 40 million workers track injuries at individual workplaces, and improve the Nation's occupational injury and illness information data published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The MSD column was removed from the OSHA 300 Log in 2003. The Agency will issue a proposed rule in January 2010.

Cranes and Derricks

More than 80 workers lose their lives each year in crane-related fatalities. OSHA's existing rule, which dates back to 1971, is partly based on industry consensus standards that are over 40 years old. On October 9, 2008, OSHA issued a comprehensive proposed revision of the Cranes and Derricks standard. The proposed rule addresses electrocution hazards, crushing and struck-by hazards, overturning, procedures for ensuring that the weight of the load is within the crane's rated capacity, and ensures that crane operators have the required knowledge and skills by requiring independent verification of operator ability. This year, OSHA completed the public hearing and comment phase of the process and is now analyzing the public's input and preparing the final rule. OSHA plans to issue the final rule in July 2010.

Crystalline Silica

Inhalation of respirable silica dust can cause lung disease, silicosis and lung cancer. Exposure to airborne silica dust occurs in operations involving cutting, sawing, drilling and crushing of concrete, brick, block and other stone products, and in operations using sand products (e.g., in glass manufacturing and sand blasting). One study estimated that there may be as many as 7,000 new cases of chronic silicosis each year. This rulemaking will update existing permissible exposure limits and establish additional provisions to protect workers from exposures to respirable crystalline silica dust. OSHA plans to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in July 2010.

Combustible Dust

Combustible dust can cause catastrophic explosions like the 2008 disaster at the Imperial Sugar refinery that killed 14 workers and seriously injured dozens more. Deadly combustible dust fires and explosions can be caused by a wide array of materials and processes in a large number of industries. Materials that may form combustible dust include wood, coal, plastics, spice, starch, flour, feed, grain, fertilizer, tobacco, paper, soap, rubber, drugs, dyes, certain textiles, and metals. While a number of OSHA standards address aspects of this hazard, the Agency does not have a comprehensive standard that addresses combustible dust. OSHA is engaged in the early stages of rulemaking to develop a combustible dust standard for general industry. OSHA published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in October 2009 and is preparing to hold stakeholder meetings in December 2009.

Hazard Communication Standard –

Global Harmonization System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals

OSHA and other U.S. agencies have been involved in a long-term project to negotiate a globally harmonized approach to informing workers about chemical hazards. The result is the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS). OSHA is revising its Hazard Communication Standard to make it consistent with the GHS. The new standard will include more specific requirements for hazard classification, as well as standardized label components which will provide consistent information and definitions for hazardous chemicals and a standard approach to conveying information on material safety data sheets. On September 30, OSHA published the proposal and is preparing for hearings in March 2010.

Beryllium

Beryllium is a lightweight metal that has a wide variety of applications, including aerospace, telecommunications and defense applications. Chronic beryllium disease occurs when people inhale beryllium dust or fumes and can take anywhere from a few months to 30 years to develop. The disease is caused by an immune system reaction to beryllium metal, and causes symptoms such as persistent coughing, difficulty breathing upon physical exertion, fatigue, chest and joint pain, weight loss, and fevers. OSHA is developing a rule that would update the Permissible Exposure Limit and establish additional provisions to protect exposed workers. Currently, the Agency is preparing to conduct a peer review of the health effects and risk assessments and plans on initiating the peer review in March 2010.

Diacetyl

Employee exposure to diacetyl causes obstructive airway disease, including the disabling and sometimes fatal lung disease called bronchiolitis obliterans or “popcorn lung.” This rulemaking will establish a Permissible Exposure Limit as well as additional provisions to protect workers from exposure to diacetyl. OSHA held a stakeholder meeting on diacetyl in 2007 and completed the small business review panel report in July 2009. OSHA is currently working on the proposed regulatory text and developing the health, risk and feasibility analysis. The Agency plans to initiate a peer review of the health effects and risk assessments in October 2010.

Walking / Working Surfaces – Subparts D & I

This proposed standard will update OSHA’s rules covering slip, trip and fall hazards and establish requirements for personal fall protection systems. The rule affects almost every non-construction worker in the United States. This is an important rulemaking because it addresses hazards that result in numerous deaths and thousands of injuries every year. The proposal is expected to prevent 20 workplace fatalities per year and over 3,500 injuries serious enough to result in days away from work. The Agency plans to issue a proposal in March 2010.