



OSHA Issues Compliance Directive to Address Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is a serious recognized occupational hazard, ranking among the top four causes of death in workplaces during the past 15 years.

Sep 12, 2011

OSHA recently issued a directive on [Enforcement Procedures for Investigating or Inspecting Incidents of Workplace Violence](#). The directive establishes uniform procedures for OSHA field staff for responding to incidents and complaints of workplace violence and conducting inspections in industries considered vulnerable to workplace violence, such as health care and social service settings and late-night retail establishments.

Workplace violence is a serious recognized occupational hazard, ranking among the top four causes of death in workplaces during the past 15 years. More than 3,000 people died from workplace homicide between 2006 and 2010, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Additional BLS data indicate that an average of more than 15,000 nonfatal workplace injury cases was reported annually during this time.

A recent OSHA inspection of a Maine psychiatric hospital found more than 90 instances in which workers were assaulted on the job by patients from 2008 through 2010. The hospital was cited for not providing its workers with adequate safeguards against workplace violence and a fine of more than \$6,000 was proposed. OSHA has also recently cited facilities in New York and Massachusetts where employees have been killed as a result of assaults.

"These incidents and others like them can be avoided or decreased if employers take appropriate precautions to protect their workers," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. "We have accompanied this directive with a new Web page on Preventing Workplace Violence to help employers address workplace violence issues."

Studies by NIOSH and other organizations show that employers who implement effective safety measures can reduce the incidence of workplace violence. These measures include training employees on workplace violence, encouraging employees to report assaults or threats, and conducting workplace violence hazard analyses. Other methods such as using entrance door detectors or buzzer systems in retail establishments, and providing adequately trained staff, alarms and employee "safe rooms" for use during emergencies in health care settings can help minimize risk.

Go to OSHA's new [Web page](#) on preventing workplace violence for more information.

Copyright 2010 [1105 Media Inc.](#) See our [Privacy Policy](#).