OSHA Identifies 10 Most Cited Safety and Health Violations

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The Occupational and Safety and Health Administration released a preliminary list of the 10 most frequently cited safety and health violations for 2016, compiled from about 32,000 inspections of workplaces by federal OSHA staff.

Thomas Galassi, director of enforcement programs for OSHA, said “...we urge employers to go beyond the minimal requirements to create a culture of safety at work, which has been shown to reduce costs, raise productivity and improve morale.”

Galassi noted, “One remarkable thing about the list is that it rarely changes. Year after year, our inspectors see thousands of the same on-the-job hazards, any one of which could result in a fatality or severe injury.”

He said that more than 4,500 workers are killed on the job every year and about three million workers are injured, noting, “If all employers simply corrected the top 10 hazards, we are confident the number of deaths, amputations and hospitalizations would drastically decline.”

The top 10 for 2016 are:

1. Fall protection: OSHA said falls are among the leading causes of worker deaths, particularly in construction. Fall protection measures, as well as ladder and scaffold safety protections, could prevent injuries and deaths. OSHA noted that it has a campaign currently in place to educate employers and workers about these measures. “Employers must take these issues seriously,” the agency said.
2. Hazard communication.
3. Scaffolds: Implementing safety protections related to scaffold work could reduce injuries and deaths.
4. Respiratory protection: OSHA said respiratory protection is essential for preventing long term and sometimes fatal health problems associated with breathing in asbestos, silica or a host of other toxic substances. OSHA noted, “But we can see from our list of violations that not nearly enough employers are providing this needed protection and training.”
5. Lockout/tagout: According to OSHA, “We also see far too many workers killed or gruesomely injured,” from lockout/tagout and machine guarding violations, when machinery starts up suddenly while being repaired, or hands and fingers are exposed to moving parts. It said proper lockout/tagout procedures make certain that machines are powered off and cannot be turned on while someone is working on them. It said installing guards to keep hands, feet and other appendages away from moving machinery prevents amputations and worse.
6. Powered industrial trucks: OSHA said that a high number of fatalities related to forklifts, and a high number of violations related to powered industrial truck safety, indicate that many workers are not being properly trained to safely drive these kinds of potentially hazardous equipment.
7. Ladders.
9. Electrical wiring.
10. Electrical, general requirements.

OSHA has established a safety and health program for workplaces, and it offers free and confidential services through its On-site Consultation Program.

Jackson Lewis attorneys can assist employers in making their workplaces safer.
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