

The Preponderance of Workplace Injuries in Healthcare Settings and Implications of the Recently Concluded OSHA National Emphasis Program (CPL 03-00-016)

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Abstract: Workplace injuries are particularly prevalent in healthcare settings. Despite a decreasing injury trend over the past decade, the incidence rate is significantly greater (more than double) in healthcare than all other private industry combined (7.4 vs 3.6 incidents per 100 workers). Not all healthcare settings are equal though, and nursing and residential care facilities and hospitals stand out as having the greatest rates far above the mean for healthcare settings. Within hospitals (and likely also in nursing and residential care facilities) the greatest total and mean per injury costs are associated with strains (musculoskeletal disorders), slips, trips, and falls, and patient interactions (workplace violence). From 2012 to 2015 OSHA conducted a National Emphasis Program (NEP) focused on musculoskeletal disorders, slips, trips, and falls, workplace violence, bloodborne pathogens, and tuberculosis within nursing and residential care facilities and hospitals. This program produced record numbers of inspections and citations, causing healthcare facilities to reevaluate their health and safety programs.

Navigating the multitude of OSHA regulations can be challenging, especially considering the greater number of inspections and citations now in force. Citations to nursing and residential care facilities and hospitals, relating to the target enforcement areas in the NEP, have ranged from \$12,000 to \$201,000. The most commonly cited violations relate to bloodborne pathogens and workplace violence. This text outlines some of the basic resources available to safety professionals to achieve compliance within the target areas. Given that OSHA has reemphasized the five target areas addressed in the NEP indefinitely, the authors advocate a proactive approach to these costly safety and health issues.

Keywords: OSHA, Healthcare, Ergonomics, Slips, Trips, Falls, Musculoskeletal Disorders, Workplace Violence, Bloodborne Pathogens, Tuberculosis