
OSHA Emphasis Programs

We all know that the goal of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is to ensure workplace safety across various industries in the United States. Some of these industries include, construction, agriculture, maritime, logging and general industry. OSHA uses a couple of programs to address specific hazards that they see in the workplace. The first one we discussed in a previous article is OSHA's Top Ten Violations. These are the most frequently occurring non-compliances OSHA uncovered during the prior fiscal year (October to September). What is beneficial about this Top Ten List, is it gives companies a guide to evaluate their safety programs and processes, and compare them to what OSHA Compliance Officers are finding in the workplace.

The second program is a directive known as OSHA's Emphasis Programs which are temporary initiatives launched by OSHA to focus on particular safety and health hazards that have been identified throughout the country or a specific region. These directives are created based on inspection data, injury and illnesses, NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) reports, peer-reviewed literature as well as analysis of inspection findings. The goal of these emphasis programs is to target specific industries based on their operations (such as Trenching and Excavation) or by their North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) (such as Food Manufacturers or Warehousing and Distribution). Additionally, these programs allow OSHA to direct resources to particular hazards and high-hazard industries and promote proactive measures (such as outreach programs) that employers can take to enhance workplace safety. In either case, it is important to determine if your organizations falls under a specific emphasis program.

Within the directive are two programs: the National Emphasis Program (known as NEP), which targets industries throughout the United States (including Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam and Washington DC) and Regional/Local Emphasis Programs (known as REPs or LEPs) that target industries within a given region. Currently, there are 10 regions and Ohio is part of region 5, which also includes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Both directives cover a wide range of concerns such as fall hazards, specific chemical usage, heat hazards in indoor and outdoor environments, machine guarding and forklift operations.

The National Emphasis Programs include:

- Combustible Dust
- Fall Prevention/Protection
- Hazardous Machinery
- Heat
- Hexavalent Chromium
- Lead
- Primary Metal Industries
- Process Safety Management (PSM)
- Shipbreaking
- Silica, Crystalline
- Trenching and Excavation
- Warehousing and Distribution

The link to OSHA's National Emphasis Programs can be found at

<https://www.osha.gov/enforcement/directives/nep>.

The Regional and Local Emphasis Programs include:

- Building Renovation/Rehabilitation and Demolition
- High Rise Building Construction Inspection in Chicago, Illinois
- Wood Pallet Manufacturing
- Exposure to Noise Hazards in the Workplace
- Food Manufacturing Industry
- Grain Handling Facilities
- Powered Industrial Vehicles
- Transportation Tank Cleaning Operations

The links to each of these emphasis programs can be found at <https://www.osha.gov/enforcement/directives/lep>.

OSHA's Emphasis Programs serve as vital tools in the ongoing effort to improve workplace safety across industries and promote a safer future. For workers, this means a safer working environment and peace of mind. For employers, engaging with emphasis programs can enhance the wellbeing of their employees while also potentially reducing long-term costs related to workplace injuries or illnesses. It is important you review the emphasis programs to determine if your organization has an operation or an NAICS number that may be on OSHA's target list for an inspection.

If you have further questions regarding OSHA's Emphasis Programs or would like more information, please contact Andy Sawan at andrew.sawan@sedgwick.com or 330.819.4728.