

The Safety & Health Advisor

Spring 2025



What Will OSHA Look Like In The New Administration?

When it comes to OSHA, history tells us that Democrats regulate and Republicans deregulate as the former tends to be more “pro worker” while the latter is “pro-business.” There is typically more enforcement of regulations and steeper fines during a Democratic administration. Republican administrations usually emphasize more industry partnerships.

President Donald Trump recently nominated environmental safety and health consultant David Keeling to lead the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). A self-employed environmental safety and health consultant based in Nashville, Tennessee, Keeling has over two decades of experience leading global health and safety programs for UPS and Amazon. Mr. Keeling’s nomination has generally been well received, particularly by the business community, who value his solid technical safety credentials and hands-on experience with workplace safety.

Besides this nomination, so far at the beginning of the Trump administration, there’s also a proposal to abolish OSHA, an ongoing effort to shrink the federal government and reduce the federal labor force, and an executive order to repeal 10 existing regulations for every proposed new regulation. Here’s how things may play out.

Arizona representative Andy Biggs (R) introduced a bill into the House early in 2025 called the “NOSHA” (for “Nullify OSHA”) Act.

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This is not just a proposal to abolish OSHA as an agency, but also to repeal the original Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970 that created the agency and established its authority. Should the proposal ever come to a vote, given the current makeup of Congress, the probability of having the votes to either eliminate OSHA or repeal the OSH Act is pretty close to zero.

But this bill is not the only way to weaken federal OSHA’s power, because we’re also in a strong climate of deregulation. For example, President Trump’s executive order (EO) states that “whenever an agency promulgates a new rule, regulation, or guidance, it must identify at least 10 existing rules, regulations, or guidance documents to be repealed.” Any agency, including OSHA, attempting to issue a new regulation would need to find 10 other rules, regulations or guidance documents to purge, and to document how they complied with the EO. That’s going to result in the promulgation of fewer regulations.

OSHA is very unlikely to be abolished, and the OSH Act probably isn’t going anywhere, either. But the pace of regulatory change by OSHA and other agencies is going to slow down and some regulations passed late in the previous administration’s term may wind up being reworked.

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We're also certainly going to see a smaller federal OSHA in terms of headcount and that can affect its ability to conduct site visits and manage enforcement at the same level.

States that have State Plans will still be able to enforce their state regulations, and they'd still be able to continue having and enforcing those regulations even in the very unlikely scenario that federal OSHA and/or the OSH Act cease to exist. State-plan states would also be unaffected by reductions in the size of federal OSHA's staff.

There is a delicate balance between OSHA regulation and employer responsibility. From the recent EHS Today article, The Pros and Cons: Maintaining Safety Balance in Efforts to Disrupt OSHA in 2025, "The debate over OSHA's future centers on whether the private sector and state governments can effectively protect workers without federal intervention. While reduced regulations could benefit businesses in terms of cost and flexibility, the potential for increased workplace injuries and fatalities is a stark reminder of the urgent need to maintain strong safety regulations." Weakening or eliminating OSHA could leave workers vulnerable to preventable hazards.

References

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Spring 2025 Regional Safety Conferences

The **New England Chapter** of the **National Safety Council (NSC-NEC)** is hosting two safety conferences in the spring. There are Keynote presentations and multiple breakout sessions on various safety and health topics for general industry and construction as well as a vendor hall offering products and services. The registration fee depends on whether or not your organization is an NSC member.

The first annual **Greater Massachusetts Safety & Health Conference** will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, **April 2-3, 2025**, at the Four Points by Sheraton in Norwood, MA. Registration is open. Conference and registration information may be found at: <https://www.nscnec.org/mass-safety-conference>

The **54th Annual New Hampshire Safety & Health Conference** will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday **May 13-14, 2025**, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester Downtown hotel in Manchester, NH. Registration is open. Conference and registration information may be found at: <https://www.nscnec.org/nh-conference>

It's also time to mark your calendars for the **12th Annual OSHA Summer Summit** being held on **Wednesday, June 4, 2025**, at the Campus Center of UMASS Amherst.

Registration is open (information is available) at: [OSHA Summer Summit Reg](#)

Early bird rate is available until May 4. Previous Summits had several safety-related vendor booths as well as general and breakout sessions on a number of current safety topics. This event has sold out early in prior years and that is expected to be the case again this year. It is always a reasonably priced day of quality safety and health training and networking!

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Workplace Violence Prevention

The prevalence of workplace violence and “active threat” situations continues to increase as reflected by news stories about such incidents. The variety of settings where these incidents occur demonstrates that no place is immune, including the workplace.

A couple of incident examples in our region include October 2023 when Joyce Grayson, an LPN in Connecticut, was murdered during a patient home visit at a halfway house. OSHA cited the employer for not providing adequate safeguards for employees and fined them \$161,323. Another incident occurred in January 2025 in East Boston when a Home Health Aide was stabbed more than 30 times by a client during a home visit at an apartment building early on a Saturday morning.

OSHA recognized that this is a significant concern and over the past few years has brought additional emphasis during inspections for evaluating an employer’s readiness to address this topic through policy, procedures and training. While there is no specific OSHA standard about this subject there is an OSHA compliance directive (CPL 02-01-052) that utilizes the “General Duty Clause” to cite and penalize employer’s where a workplace violence prevention program is either non-existent or inadequate in a setting where it could be expected that employees could be exposed to potential violence based on certain risk factors. There is a particular focus on the healthcare and retail industries.

The General Duty Clause states, “Each Employer - (1) shall furnish to each of his employees’ employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees.”

To help reduce the potential for violence in the workplace, as far as possible, every organization should have a written policy for this topic as a foundation for a complete program with additional procedures (including a multiple path reporting process) as well as documented employee training.



One accepted definition of workplace violence is “any physical assault, threatening behavior (including gestures) or verbal abuse (including harassment) occurring in a work setting. It includes “bullying” and can even extend to electronic communication and/or social media. A workplace (not all inclusive) may be any location either permanent or temporary where an employee performs any work-related duty, including buildings or surrounding areas, the street, parking lots, client homes or traveling to and from work assignments.”

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The four types of potential violence that should be addressed in a formal program include:

Criminal Intent which includes violent acts by people who enter the workplace to commit a robbery or other crime – or current or former employees who enter the workplace with the intent to commit a crime.

Client/Patient/Resident includes violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, residents, students or any others to whom the employer provides a service. **Co-Workers** include violence against co-workers, supervisors or managers by a current or former employee, supervisor or manager. **Personal Relation** (commonly known as domestic violence) includes violence in the workplace by someone who does not work there, but is known to, or has a personal relationship with an employee.

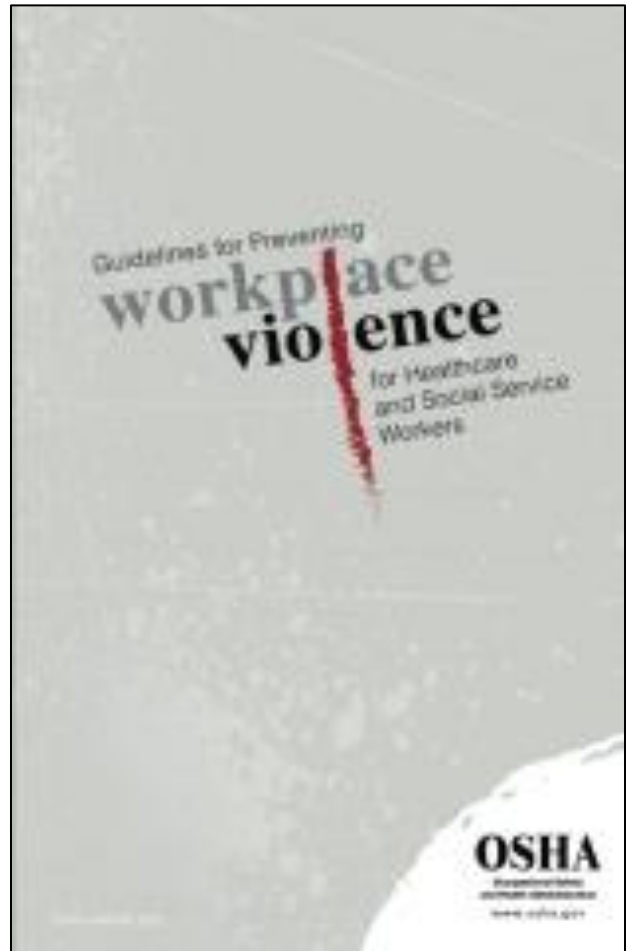
Every workplace violence prevention program should include the following major elements.

- ❖ Management Commitment, Policy and Employee Involvement
- ❖ Worksite Analysis/Exposures
- ❖ Hazard Prevention and Control
- ❖ Training and Education
- ❖ Recordkeeping and Evaluation

The consequences for violation of the workplace violence policy should be tied to the organization's progressive discipline policy. Training should include the organization's policy, risk factors, ways to recognize and prevent potential violence situations, location or organization specific procedures, the reporting process, the response plan in the event of incident and resources that are available to employees.

Click [this link](#) to access the Joint Commission workplace violence prevention resource page.

OSHA Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Healthcare and Social Service Workers can be found [here](#).



There are other resource materials prepared by OSHA that go into greater detail as to what each of the above elements involves. A special webpage on the topic, including links to additional resources, can be found at: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/>

Atlantic Charter's Safety and Health Consultants are another resource that can assist your organization by providing guidance for establishing a workplace violence prevention program.

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Respiratory Illness Update

Respiratory viruses continue to circulate in the general population, including Covid-19, influenza and RSV. As such, CDC (Centers for Disease Control) provides information about virus activity levels and prevention strategies, including the use of masks.

Virus activity information can be viewed at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/data/index.html>

Information about Preventing Respiratory Viruses may be viewed at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/index.html>

Specific Information about mask use may be viewed at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/masks.html>

Healthy Hearing: Understanding Hearing Loss and Prevention

Hearing is one of our most valuable senses, yet many people take it for granted until problems arise. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 1.5 billion people worldwide experience some degree of hearing loss, with nearly 430 million requiring rehabilitation services.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that nearly 25% of adults aged 20-69 have signs of noise-induced hearing loss. While occupational noise exposure is a well-known risk, there are many other places and situations where hearing damage can occur without warning.

Unexpected Sources of Hearing Damage

Beyond noisy workplaces, various everyday environments can pose risks to your hearing:

- **Concerts and Sporting Events:** The average concert reaches 100-120 decibels (dB), well above the safe listening limit of 85 dB.
- **Personal Audio Devices:** Listening to music through headphones at maximum volume can expose the ears to sound levels exceeding 100 dB.
- **Public Transport and Traffic:** Subway trains can reach 90 dB, and loud motorcycles or sirens can exceed 110 dB.
- **Recreational Activities:** Activities such as hunting, motorboating, and fireworks displays often produce dangerously high noise levels.
- **Household Tools and Appliances:** Lawnmowers, leaf blowers, and power tools can generate sound levels around 85-100 dB.



The inner ear has delicate hair cells, responsible for converting sound vibrations into electrical signals sent to the brain. When exposed to excessive noise, these hair cells can become overstimulated and eventually damaged or destroyed. Since these cells do not regenerate, hearing loss is often permanent.

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Preventative Measures for Healthy Hearing

Symptoms of inner ear damage include muffled hearing, difficulty understanding speech, and persistent ringing in the ears (tinnitus).

Fortunately, there are several ways to protect your hearing and minimize long-term damage:

- **Use Hearing Protection:** Invest in high-quality earplugs or noise-canceling earmuffs and make sure they are fitted properly when attending loud events, using power tools, or engaging in noisy hobbies.
- **Follow the 60/60 Rule:** When using headphones, listen at no more than 60% of the maximum volume for no longer than 60 minutes at a time.
- **Maintain Safe Distances:** Standing farther away from loudspeakers at concerts or staying indoors when fireworks are launched can reduce sound exposure.
- **Monitor Decibel Levels:** Smartphone apps can help measure estimated noise levels in real-time to ensure safe limits. A calibrated decibel meter is recommended for testing noise in workplace settings.
- **Take Listening Breaks:** If exposed to loud environments, take regular breaks to give your ears time to recover.
- **Schedule Regular Hearing Checkups:** Early detection of hearing loss through audiometric testing can help prevent further damage.

Hearing loss is often irreversible but largely preventable. Educating yourself and others about the hidden risks of everyday noise exposure can lead to healthier hearing habits. You can learn more about noise-induced hearing loss and prevention [here](#).

Additional tips on hearing protection and how to use ear plugs from the National Institutes of Health can also be found at this [link](#).

Hand Tools: Injury Prevention Tips

Manual and powered hand tools can pose significant risks to workers if proper safety precautions are not followed. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, hand and power tool injuries result in nearly half a million emergency room visits each year. These tools, ranging from screwdrivers, wrenches, hammers to nail guns, powered saws, high-speed grinders, and sanders can cause a variety of injuries, including eye injuries, lacerations, burns, strains, contusions, and even amputations. To reduce these risks, it's essential for employees to prioritize safety in both preparation and operation. Being properly trained in using the right tool for the job, adhering to safe work practices, and avoiding rushing can go a long way in preventing accidents.

Employers should provide detailed safety trainings for new workers that include demonstrations and hands-on practice. This helps workers become familiar with the correct tool for the job in their work environment, especially for new employees with no prior experience.

One of the most critical aspects of hand tool safety (both powered and non-powered) is proper training. For power tools, users must be thoroughly trained in the tool's correct application, operation, including how to safely start, use (control the tool), and stop it. Understanding the specific hazards of each tool and its proper maintenance procedures is equally important.

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For new workers, employers should provide detailed safety training that includes demonstration and hands-on practice, where workers can familiarize themselves with the correct use of the tools they will be working with in a controlled environment. This is particularly important for employees with no prior experience.

For manual tools, proper training is also crucial. For example, a screwdriver should never be used as a chisel as it could slip and cause a severe puncture injury. Also, wrenches improperly used as hammers can more easily miss their impact target, and lead to serious struck by related contusion.



The condition of the tool (and its cutter/blade in the case of powered saws) is also crucial in injury prevention. A dull or incorrect type of cutter blade on a circular saw can cause it to kick back suddenly which could lead to a serious injury. Regular maintenance and inspections should be part of every worker's routine to ensure the tool and cutter blade is the correct for the job and in good working condition. Also, ensuring that power cords are intact and that safety features (such as guards or shields) are in place can significantly reduce the risk of injury.

Tools with missing/damaged parts should be immediately repaired (e.g., blade/cutter, or bit changed) or taken out of service to prevent potential accidents. It's important to never bypass safety features or operate tools without their protective equipment, such as safety guards/shields on powered hand grinders fitted with cut off wheels.



Wearing proper personal protective equipment (PPE) is another essential step to prevent injuries when using hand tools. Workers should always don appropriate gear, such as safety glass/goggles, gloves, ear protection, and sturdy footwear. Safety glasses with side shields or goggles protect eyes from flying debris, while ear protection guards against hearing damage from impact or continuous excessive noise. Gloves can help protect hands from burns, abrasions, contusions, or cuts, and sturdy footwear ensures protection from falling objects or tools.

Maintaining focus and avoiding distractions is essential for safe operation. Fatigue, lack of concentration, or multitasking can lead to mistakes that result in accidents.

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Workers should take regular breaks to stay alert and avoid operating powered hand tools if they are tired or distracted.

Ensuring that the workspace is clean and organized, with no clutter around the tool, will also minimize risks. By staying aware and mindful of safety procedures, workers can reduce the likelihood of injuries, ensuring that powered hand tools remain an efficient and effective part of their work.

Basic tool use procedures may appear to be common sense, yet accidents continue to occur. In addition to improper tool selection, additional factors may include lack of training, change in work requirements/tasks, broken or missing tools, and non-routine tasks.

Establishing specific tool use guidelines, including safety requirements, can improve performance. Basic employee safety provisions should always be required. See <https://www.osha.gov/hand-power-tools>
And <https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/26421-hand-tool-safely-the-basics> for basic employee safety provisions.

New OSHA Penalty Amounts

On January 10, 2025, the U.S. Department of Labor announced changes to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) civil penalty amounts based on inflation for 2025. In 2015, Congress passed the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act to advance the effectiveness of civil monetary penalties and to maintain their deterrent effect. Under the Act, agencies are required to publish “[catch-up](#)” rules that adjust the level of civil monetary penalties and make subsequent annual adjustments for inflation no later than January 15 of each year.

On Jan. 15, 2025, the maximum OSHA penalties for serious and other-than-serious violations will increase from \$16,131 to \$16,550 per violation. The maximum penalty for willful or repeated violations will increase from \$161,323 to \$165,514 per violation. For additional details, visit [OSHA’s Penalties page](#) and [read the final rule](#) for more information.

If you need assistance in evaluating your ergonomics or safety and health program, please contact Neal Freedman, John Cotnam, Mark Hickox or Colin Trombley from Atlantic Charter’s Safety and Health Department at (617) 488-6500.