

OSHA Identifies Workplaces with Highest Injury and Illness Rates

The Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health has alerted approximately 13,000 employers throughout the country that their injury and illness rates are significantly higher than the national average and encourages them to take steps to address safety and health hazards in the workplace.

In a letter to those employers, John Henshaw explained that while their rates were higher than most other businesses in the country, the notification was simply a proactive step to encourage employers to take steps now to reduce the rates and improve safety and health for their employees.

"The intent of the notification is to alert employers that their injury and illness rates are above average," Henshaw said, "but, as important, we also want to offer them assistance to help reduce those rates. This process is not necessarily a negative; on the contrary, it provides employers a tremendous opportunity to take steps to improve workplace safety and health and create value for their organization."

OSHA identified establishments with the nation's highest workplace injury and illness rates based on data reported by 80,000 employers surveyed by the agency last year (that survey collected injury and illness data from calendar year 2002). Workplaces receiving the alert letters had seven or more injuries or illnesses resulting in days away from work, restricted work activity, or job transfer (DART) for every 100 full-time workers. Nationwide, the average U.S. workplace had fewer than three DART instances for every 100 workers.

Henshaw sent letters to all employers with high injury and illness rates, and provided copies of their injury and illness data, along with a list of the most frequently violated OSHA standard for their specific industry. While addressing his concerns for the high rates, Henshaw also offered the agency's help in turning those rates around, suggesting, among other things, using the free safety and health consultation services provided by OSHA through the states, developing an internal process to identify and control hazards, or hiring outside safety and health consultants.

"The data collection initiative is conducted each year and gives us a clearer picture of those establishments with higher than normal injury and illness rates," he said. "This information allows us the opportunity to place our inspection resources where they're most needed and to plan outreach and compliance assistance programs where they will benefit the most."

The 13,000 sites are listed alphabetically, by state, on OSHA's website at http://www.osha.gov/as/opa/foia/hot_10.html. This list does not designate those earmarked for any future inspection. Also, the sites listed are those in states covered by federal OSHA; the list does not include employers in the 21 states and one territory (Puerto Rico) that operate OSHA-approved state plans covering the private sector.