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OSHA Launches National Emphasis Program Targeting Nursing and Residential Care Facilities

On April 5, 2012, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced a new National Emphasis Program (NEP) to reduce occupational illnesses and injuries commonly experienced in nursing and residential care facilities. The NEP focuses primarily on the hazards prevalent in these facilities, specifically ergonomic stressors related to patient lifting and handling; exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials; exposure to tuberculosis; workplace violence; and slips, trips, and falls.

According to data collected in 2010 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nursing and residential care facilities continue to have one of the highest rates of injury and illness among industries for which nationwide days away, restricted work activity, and job transfer (DART) injury and illness rates were calculated for 2010. A facility's DART rate is calculated from reported injuries and illnesses on the employer's OSHA form 300. This enforcement effort initially targets facilities that have a DART rate of 10 or higher.

OSHA's NEPs are designed to focus on specific hazards in a particular industry for a three-year period. If additional hazards come to OSHA's attention during the inspection, the inspection may be expanded to include the additional hazards. As an example, the NEP for nursing and residential care facilities identified exposure to hazardous chemicals, such as sanitizers, disinfectants, and hazardous drugs, and to multidrug resistant organisms (MDROs), such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, as additional hazards. The NEP discusses each of the identified hazardous areas and provides guidance to OSHA compliance staff on how best to conduct investigations to assess potential hazards.

Citations issued to facilities subject to inspections pursuant to this NEP could carry significant penalties. To minimize potential risk, employers may want to consider immediate preventive employee outreach and training efforts covering information on recognized hazards for the purpose of advancing awareness of those hazards. Nursing and residential care facilities may wish to review policies and procedures to ensure that they are appropriate to eliminate or reduce hazardous exposure and to ensure that there is a system for monitoring compliance with these policies and procedures. Facility directors also may want to consider refresher training in preparation for an OSHA inspection, particularly related to protecting the privacy

rights of residents and the confidentiality of medical records.

Download the full text of the [NEP for nursing and residential care facilities here](#).

CONTACT US

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