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[A to Z Index](#) | [En Español](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [FAQs](#) | [About OSHA](#)

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[Enforcement](#)
[Data & Statistics](#)
[Training](#)
[Publications](#)
[Print](#)
[Newsroom](#)
[Small Business](#)
[Anti-Retaliation](#)

Facebook

Twitter

Email

Print

Newsroom

Small Business

Anti-Retaliation

Gmail

Favorites

More... (293)

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[OSHA News Release - Table of Contents](#)

News Release

U.S. Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor | June 25, 2015

OSHA adds key hazards for investigators' focus in healthcare inspections

Emphasis placed on musculoskeletal disorders, bloodborne pathogens, workplace violence, tuberculosis and slips, trips and falls

WASHINGTON — Targeting some of the most common causes of workplace injury and illness in the healthcare industry, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced the agency is expanding its use of enforcement resources in hospitals and nursing homes to focus on: musculoskeletal disorders related to patient or resident handling; bloodborne pathogens; workplace violence; tuberculosis and slips, trips and falls.

U.S. hospitals recorded nearly 58,000 work-related injuries and illnesses in 2013, amounting to 6.4 work-related* injuries and illnesses for every 100 full-time employees: almost twice as high as the overall rate for private industry.

"Workers who take care of us when we are sick or hurt should not be at such high risk for injuries — that simply is not right. Workers in hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities have work injury and illness rates that are among the highest in the country, and virtually all of these injuries and illnesses are preventable," said Dr. David Michaels, assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health. "OSHA has provided employers with education, training and resource materials, and it's time for hospitals and the health care industry to make the changes necessary to protect their workers."

OSHA has advised its staff through a memorandum that all inspections of hospitals and nursing home facilities, including those prompted by complaints, referrals or severe injury reports, should include the review of potential hazards involving MSD related to patient handling; bloodborne pathogens; workplace violence; tuberculosis; and slips, trips and falls.

"The most recent statistics tell us that almost half of all reported injuries in the healthcare industry were attributed to overexertion and related tasks. Nurses and nursing assistants each accounted for a substantial share of this total," added Dr. Michaels. "There are feasible solutions for preventing these hazards and now is the time for employers to implement them."

For more information; to obtain compliance assistance; file a complaint or report amputations, losses of an eye, workplace hospitalizations, fatalities or situations posing imminent danger to workers, the public can call OSHA's toll-free hotline at 800-321-OSHA (6742).

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.

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OSHA News Release - Table of Contents

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