



Regulatory Compliance

Avoid 10 Major OSHA Violations

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What You Need to Know

These common OSHA violations range from electrical issues to forklift concerns. Controlling industrial trucks and machine safety are major concerns. Get tips on how to avoid each of the 10 violations.

OSHA infractions are common in manufacturing. Here are some ways to keep from breaking the rules.

Remember this: Violations from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) are not inevitable.

Here are the top 10 violations in *manufacturing*, as cited by OSHA, between October 2015 and September 2016 and advice on how to avoid being cited for them:

1. Control of Hazardous Energy

A jammed conveyor belt suddenly comes to life and injures the worker sent to restart the machine. An employee repairing a piece of factory equipment gets shocked when there's an electrical short. These are just two of the many possible injuries that OSHA's control of hazardous energy standard (*1910.147*) is designed to prevent. The standard, which generated the most citations between October 2015 and September 2016, lays out steps employers and employees should take to avoid injury or death when stored energy is released during maintenance.

What to Do: Though there are numerous requirements involved with meeting this standard, perhaps the most important is the use of lockout/tagout equipment and procedures to ensure that machinery being serviced won't start up unexpectedly. Thorough training of employees—including a policy that allows only the employee who applied a lockout/tagout device to remove it—is also a critical part of compliance.

2. General Requirements for All Machines

Guillotine cutters. Alligator shears. Power presses. As helpful and important as these and other machines are, their moving parts have the potential to cause a range of serious injuries, including amputations, crushed fingers and hands, and blindness. Incorporating safeguards that allow for the safe operation of this equipment is the goal of this OSHA standard (*1910.212*), the source of the second-highest number of citations.

What to Do: Even though there are innumerable machines with moving parts that can potentially cause harm, there's still a rule of thumb about avoiding a citation: Make sure all equipment has guards or other devices that prevent operators from being exposed to harm. These can include using physical barriers that enclose machine parts and positioning machines in a way that makes it impossible for a worker to touch a hazardous part.

3. Hazard Communication

You don't have to work at a chemical manufacturing facility to be exposed to potentially hazardous chemicals. When chemicals are produced, presented or imported from a worksite, this OSHA standard (*1910.1200*) establishes the type of information employers need to provide their workers.

What to Do: Put simply, employees need to be fully aware of the identities of and hazards related to the chemicals they may be exposed to in the workplace—and the information must be easily understood. This means both developing and posting labels and data sheets about chemicals and providing information and training to ensure workers recognize and understand hazards.

4. Process Safety Management of Highly Hazardous Chemicals

Alone in a small bathroom, a worker poured paint remover into a bathtub he'd been asked to strip and refinish. Two hours later, he was found unconscious and slumped over the tub and was later declared dead. The cause: exposure to methylene chloride in the paint remover. This cautionary tale is included in OSHA's *Fatal Facts* as a warning about the dangers of hazardous chemicals, which the process safety management of highly hazardous chemicals standard (*1910.119*) covers.

What to Do: Recognizing the dangers of a wide range of explosive, flammable and otherwise hazardous chemicals, OSHA's standard seeks to protect workers. But because facilities use different chemicals, employers have flexibility in complying as long as certain "process safety" requirements are met. There are numerous elements to this approach, including involving employees in learning about the chemicals they are working with and establishing emergency planning and response procedures.

5. Wiring Methods, Components and Equipment for General Use

Electricity is the lifeblood of manufacturing facilities. But whether you're an electrician working directly with electricity or simply someone in close proximity to circuits, outlets and other potential electrical hazards, it's important to safeguard against the dangers of shocks, fires and electrocutions. This OSHA standard (*1910.305*) is one of many designed to protect workers from electrical hazards.

What to Do: Avoiding potential citations requires following fairly specific guidelines about wiring and grounding. For instance, the standard specifies that metal raceways, cable frames and other metal noncurrent-carrying equipment meant to act as grounding conductors must be sufficiently bonded to withstand any possible fault current. Any temporary electrical installations of more than 600 volts can be used only during tests and emergencies.

6. Mechanical Power-Transmission Apparatus

Flywheels, belts, pulleys and other devices all transmit energy to the part of the machine that does the work. Their movement creates hazards that OSHA's mechanical power-transmission apparatus standard **(1910.219)** seeks to address.

What to Do: Avoiding citations related to power-transmission devices comes down to educating yourself about the requirements for each component. For example, the standard mandates that pulleys be kept in alignment to prevent belts from coming off and causing an injury. Sprocket wheels and chains must be enclosed to help workers avoid coming in contact with moving parts. More generally, the standard also requires all power-transmission equipment to undergo preventive maintenance every 60 days.

7. Powered Industrial Trucks

Most of us know what OSHA calls powered industrial trucks as forklifts or lift trucks. Essential for moving pallets, boxes and crates around a warehouse or worksite, these machines have the potential to injure both their operators and co-workers if not used properly. The powered industrial trucks standard **(1910.178)**—which generated 137 citations from October 2015 to September 2016—provides guidance to avoid forklift overturns or being hit or crushed by a falling load.

What to Do: Step one in complying with OSHA's regulations is simple: Nobody younger than 18 can operate a forklift. In addition, forklifts must be inspected both before being placed into service and daily to ensure they are safe to operate. Other requirements include drivers using seat belts and maintaining a speed that allows for quick stops. Anyone driving a forklift must receive training and be licensed.

8. Guarding Floor and Wall Openings and Holes

When Wile E. Coyote falls through a hole in the floor, it's funny in a cartoonish kind of way. But when a worker tumbles through a floor opening of any kind, not only is it not amusing, but it's also dangerous. OSHA's standard for guarding floor and wall openings and holes **(1910.23)** is meant to protect against those falls.

What to Do: Though compliance with this standard depends on whether the hazard comes from an opening in a staircase, a wall, a skylight or even a manhole, the basic guidance is this: Construct a barrier, railing or covering that will prevent someone from falling through. As an example, any temporary floor opening is supposed to be either surrounded by railings or attended at all times by a worker.

9. General Requirements

Though the title of this OSHA standard **(1910.303)** is "General," it really pertains to electrical safety and protecting workers from shocks, electrocution and fires.

What to Do: The safe and reliable use of electricity requires that a long list of things be done right. Everything from installing wiring and electrical equipment neatly to avoiding damp or wet locations and excessive temperatures is part of compliance. Put simply, make sure a skilled professional does any electrical work at your facility.

10. Respiratory Protection

Exposure to dust, gases or smoke and a lack of oxygen are all reasons an estimated 5 million American workers routinely wear respirators. This protective equipment is essential for safeguarding people from lung diseases, including cancer, and their use is addressed OSHA's respiratory protection standard *(1910.134)*.

What to Do: To avoid a citation, employers must first recognize whether workers are at risk of breathing contaminated air. If the answer is yes, the standard requires implementing a respiratory protection program that spells out procedures for selecting, using and maintaining respirators as well as medical evaluations of employees who use them.

What other violations do you want to know how to avoid?

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