



Workplace Safety

Fall Safety Leads OSHA's Top 10 Violations for 12th Year

James Langford | Apr 13, 2023

Fines for failing to protect workers from on-the-job falls surged 25 percent to \$36.2 million in 2022, as the regulation topped the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration's list of most-violated rules for the 12th straight year.

Not only is the cost of such violations increasing for employers, but fall-related accidents remain both common and deadly. Workplace falls accounted for more than a third of the **986 construction fatalities in the 12 months through September 2022**, the most recent year for which U.S. Labor Department statistics were available.

"Fall hazard violations have remained on the top of the list for so long because the hazard is present in most workplaces," Patrick Kapust told *Safety + Health magazine*, a National Safety Council publication, when the preliminary 2022 findings were reported last fall.

Risks range from improper use of stairways, ladders and scaffolding to unprotected floor holes and wall openings. OSHA has developed a variety of tactics to prevent injuries and deaths related to them, including a [webpage](#) with educational materials and resources.

Read more: [How OSHA Guardrail Requirements Protect Against the Leading Edge for Falls](#)

The agency's Top 10 list is important for employers nationwide because the trends it identifies guide safety professionals in developing solutions, Lorraine Martin, the National Safety Council's president, said at the group's fall meeting.

"If you ask people what they value most in their life, what they really care about, most will say it is their health, and the health and safety of their loved ones," Doug Parker, assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health, told the Industrial Truck Association last June. "Yet despite this being a core personal value for most people, too often, we do not apply this value when it comes to how we design, supervise, and perform work."

OSHA's goal, he added, is to align "this most basic and fundamental shared value—our health and safety and the health and safety of our families—with the core values of every workplace in America."

Here's a closer look at the 10 most frequently violated OSHA standards in 2022. The rankings are based on OSHA's preliminary list and include updated figures on citations and penalties as of early April, when the final list is typically published.

No. 1: Fall Protection

Standard: *1926.501*

2022 Citations: 5,837

Change from previous year: +4.6%

2022 Fines: \$36.2 million

OSHA imposes a variety of rules to protect workers from on-the-job falls, from mandating precautions such as guardrails on walkways or open floors more than 6 feet above ground to ensuring floor strength and putting covers on holes. Construction companies received 5,680 citations for violating these rules last year, by far the most of any industry, followed by manufacturers, which received 39.

Read More: *Workplace Falls: 3 Critical Points To Prevent OSHA's Top Violation*

No. 2: Hazard Communication

Standard: *1910.1200*

2022 Citations: 2,613

Change from previous year: +14%

2022 Fines: \$3.89 million

OSHA requires employers to inform workers about the hazards of all chemicals to which they might be exposed on the job, whether they're produced at a site or simply used there. Along with a hazard communication program, employers are expected to use labels where appropriate, provide safety data sheets and arrange training. Manufacturers received 880 citations for violating hazard communication requirements in 2022, outstripping construction.

Read More: *4 Keys to Complying with OSHA's New Hazard Communication Rule*

No. 3: Ladders

Standard: *1926.1053*

2022 Citations: 2,421

Change from previous year: +13%

2022 Fines: \$7.33 million

Portable ladders used in workplaces are generally required to be strong enough to carry at least four times the maximum intended load, according to OSHA; an exception is made for extra-heavy-duty models capable of carrying 300 pounds. With those, the multiple is narrowed to 3.3. OSHA also sets standards for rung spacing, shape and design. As with fall protection, construction firms were given the most citations for failing to comply last year. They received 2,344, followed by manufacturers with at least 19.

Read More: *Ladder Safety Tips: What You Need To Know To Protect Your Workers*

No. 4: Respiratory Protection

Standard: *1910.134*

2022 Citations: 2,393

Change from previous year: +8.7%

2022 Fines: \$4.99 million

This rule's goal is to prevent atmospheric contamination with substances including noxious dust, gases and fumes, if possible, by using less toxic materials, confining or enclosing the operation and providing adequate ventilation, according to OSHA. When those measures are insufficient, employers are required to provide respirators capable of protecting workers from exposure-related hazards. Manufacturers received the most citations, 852, for violations, followed by healthcare and social assistance companies, which received 764.

Read More: *PPE Selection: Find The Right Type Of Respirator*

No. 5: Scaffolding

Standard: *1926.451*

2022 Citations: 2,212

Change from previous year: +4.5%

2022 Fines: \$6.73 million

OSHA standards for scaffolds include requirements that, in most cases, they be sturdy enough to support their own weight plus four times the maximum intended load without collapsing. Specifications are also set for width of walkways, use of guardrails and safety harnesses as well as resistance to tipping over. Construction businesses received 2,212 citations for scaffolding violations, topping industries from manufacturing to waste management and real estate.

No. 6: Lockout/Tagout for Hazardous Energy

Standard: *1910.147*

2022 Citations: 2,133

Change from previous year: +13%

2022 Fines: \$15.2 million

OSHA's lockout/tagout standard sets procedures for disabling machinery or equipment to prevent release of hazardous energy—including electrical, mechanical, hydraulic, chemical and other types—during service or maintenance. OSHA issued 1,591 citations to manufacturers for violating lockout/tagout rules in 2022. That placed the field ahead of sectors from waste management to construction and mining.

Read More: *Lockout / Tagout Technical Information*

No. 7: Powered Industrial Trucks

Standard: *1910.178*

2022 Citations: 1,889

Change from previous year: +17%

2022 Fines: \$6.39 million

This rule sets safety guidelines for construction, use and maintenance of workplace equipment including fork trucks, platform lift trucks and motorized hand trucks—not vehicles used on farms or those intended for over-the-road hauling. Powered industrial trucks are required to meet the design and construction specifications set out in the “American National Standard for Powered Industrial Trucks, Part II, ANSI B56.1-1969.” Manufacturers were given 818 citations for failing to comply with the standard last year, significantly more than fields from construction to transportation and retail.

Read More: *What You Need To Know Before Operating Powered Industrial Trucks*

No. 8: Fall Protection Training

Standard: *1926.503*

2022 Citations: 1,751

Change from previous year: +1.3%

2022 Fines: \$3.54 million

Employers are required to provide training on workplace falling hazards as well as safety procedures and equipment from guardrails to safety nets, personal safety harnesses and controlled access zones. Most of OSHA’s fall-protection training citations in 2022 were for construction businesses, which received 1,697 and outpaced fields from waste management to manufacturing, utilities and retail.

Read more: *5 Quick Tips for Passive Fall Protection*

No. 9: Eye and Face Protection

Standard: *1926.102*

2022 Citations: 1,552

Change from previous year: +11%

2022 Fines: \$6.22 million

Employers are required to ensure their workers use appropriate eye or face protection, including masks, goggles and safety glasses, to guard themselves from hazards such as flying particles, molten metals, acids or caustic liquids and chemical gases. OSHA’s rule includes provisions governing prescription lenses, cleaning, disinfecting and comfort. The construction industry received 1,522 citations for violating eye- and face-protection rules last year, outstripping fields from manufacturing to waste management.

Read More: *High Frequency and High Risk: Protecting Workers from Pinch-Point Hazards*

No. 10: Machine Guarding

Standard: 1910.212

2022 Citations: 1,460

Change from previous year: +14%

2022 Fines: \$11.5 million

Federal regulations require use of machine guards such as barriers, two-hand activation controls and electronic safety devices to protect operators of potentially hazardous equipment as well as other people in the area. Risks include flying chips, sparks and nip points created when parts move toward each other or past a stationary object where they could trap limbs, causing injuries from bruising to cuts and even amputation. OSHA issued 1,147 citations to American manufacturers for violating rules on machine guarding last year, placing the industry far ahead of fields from retail to construction.

Which of OSHA's Top 10 safety violations are the biggest concerns in your workplace? Tell us how you handle them in the comments below.

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