

OSHA Launches National Emphasis Program For Warehouses and Distribution Centers

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PRACTICES OSHA, Labor and Employment

On July 13, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) launched a [national emphasis program](#) (NEP) to prevent workplace hazards in warehouses, mail/postal processing facilities, distribution centers, parcel delivery and courier services, and certain high-injury-rate retail establishments, which include home centers, hardware stores, supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores, and warehouse clubs and supercenters.

According to OSHA, as warehousing and distribution centers have experienced tremendous growth within the past ten years, their occupational injuries and illnesses and average Days Away Restricted or Transferred (DART) rates have also increased at rates significantly higher than baseline private general industry rates.

Under this NEP, inspections will focus on workplace hazards common to the above industries including but not limited to:

- Powered industrial vehicle operations;
- Material handling/storage;
- Walking-working surfaces;
- Means of egress;
- Fire protection; and
- Heat and ergonomic hazards (if OSHA learns that these hazards are present).

All inspections under this NEP are comprehensive safety inspections. However, as to high-injury-rate retail establishments expected to be targeted under the NEP, each calendar year, OSHA will provide Area Offices a list of establishments in the NAICS codes identified in the NEP with the highest DART rates. Each Area Office will be required to complete an inspection of all of those retail establishments prior to receiving a new list for the following year's cycle. While inspections in these establishments will cover the loading and storage areas, OSHA may expand the scope of its inspection when there is evidence that other violative conditions may be found in other areas. Under all inspections, OSHA will also assess heat exposure and will expand the inspection scope in accordance with the NEP for Outdoor and Indoor Heat-Related Hazards.

Prior to any inspection activity under this NEP (except as to high-injury-rate retail establishments), each Regional Office is required to implement a 90-day outreach program for covered establishments, which may include training, education, and meetings with employers and local unions.

The NEP is effective for 3 years, and will terminate on July 13, 2026. Employers should revisit their workplace safety policies and procedures to ensure compliance with OSHA's standards and hazards common to the covered industries, and especially for the above-listed hazards identified by

OSHA. For more information on how this NEP has an impact on your business, please contact any member of our [OSHA and Workplace Disasters Practice Group](#).