

# Looking Back at the First Year of OSHA's Severe Injury Reporting Program

---

December 14, 2016

---

**PRACTICES** OSHA, Labor and Employment

---

As of January 1, 2015, all employers have been required to report all work-related hospitalizations, amputations, or eye losses to federal OSHA within 24 hours, in addition to the long-standing requirement to report all work-related fatalities to OSHA within eight hours. In March 2016, OSHA issued a report detailing the results of the first full year of severe injury reporting, during which there were over 10,000 reports.<sup>1</sup> Manufacturing, with 57 percent of amputation reports and 26 percent of hospitalization reports, and construction, with 10 percent of amputation reports and 19 percent of hospitalization reports, were the top two most reported industry sectors.

OSHA praised the new reporting program for achieving its two principal goals: (1) enabling OSHA to better assist compliance and enforcement efforts; and (2) engaging more employers in identifying and eliminating serious hazards. The report gives examples of accident reports that led to “opportunities for employers to work with OSHA specialists to keep similar incidents—or worse—from happening again.” For example, in one scenario where a worker’s fingertip was severed during a loading incident, the employer created a new hands-free loading tool, alerted the manufacturer of the issue, and alerted other employers who were likely to use the same equipment.

Fifty-eight percent of amputation reports (and about a third of reports overall) were responded to with an on-site inspection by an OSHA compliance officer. OSHA commented that many employers go above and beyond OSHA’s requirements in order to keep their employees safe. According to OSHA, these inspections inspire many employers to make changes to their overall safety programs to the benefit of their employees. However, not all reports resulted in an inspection. In fact, 69 percent of hospitalization reports (and 62 percent of reports overall) were referred to the Rapid Response Investigation process and investigated by the employer. In an investigation of this type, the employer identifies the causes of the injury and presents its findings, along with proposed abatements, to OSHA. According to OSHA, “we have found this process to be extremely effective in abating hazards while also using far fewer OSHA resources than are required for on-site inspections.” In the southeast regional office, for example, OSHA noticed a trend of fingertip amputations among workers using food slicers in delis and restaurants. In response, the office contacted food service employers across the region and distributed a new fact sheet, “Preventing Cuts and Amputations from Food Slicers and Meat Grinders.” The new reporting requirement enabled OSHA to spot a hazard and act quickly to prevent future injuries.

On the other hand, however, OSHA commented that some employers still try to hide hazards in order to avoid having to fix them, while others experience employee injuries in the workplace but still continue the practices that put employees at risk in the first place. Through the reporting program, OSHA is finding out about these incidents and about employers with recurring patterns of injuries. OSHA reminds employers that the unadjusted penalty for not reporting a severe injury can be as much as \$7,000, with even higher penalty levels coming in the near future. Moreover, if OSHA learns that an employer knew about the requirement to report but chose not to, the fine can be much higher. Already, one employer has been assessed enhanced penalties of \$70,000 for willfully failing to report.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. David Michaels, [Year One of OSHA's Severe Injury Reporting Program: An Impact Evaluation](#), OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (Mar. 17, 2016). In 2015, there were 10,388 incidents involving severe work-related injuries, including 7,636 hospitalizations and 2,644 amputations.