



SAFETY

Nebraska Building Chapter

AGC Safety Initiative E-News July 6, 2022

OUR Safety MISSION: Help each other enforce safety rules to ensure that every person on construction site goes home safe and healthy at end of the workday.

Calendar of Events – [Learn more](#)

OSHA extends emphasis program on COVID-19

Citing data that shows hospitalizations “may increase significantly in the coming weeks,” OSHA has extended its [revised National Emphasis Program on COVID-19](#) until further notice.

The NEP is designed to ensure “employees in high-hazard industries or work tasks are protected” from contracting COVID-19. Those industries include health care and meat and poultry processing. The program was originally set to expire July 7. “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported increasing coronavirus hospitalization rates nationwide since mid-April, and data forecasts that hospitalizations may increase significantly in the coming weeks,” OSHA says in a press release. “This increase in hospitalizations reinforces the need for OSHA to continue prioritizing inspections at workplaces with a higher potential for coronavirus exposures, such as hospitals, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and other health care and emergency response providers treating patients with coronavirus.”

The NEP – [revised in July 2021](#) to include the agency’s [emergency temporary standard on COVID-19 for health care workers](#) – also focuses on COVID-19-related complaints, referrals and severe incident reports. OSHA is temporarily increasing its COVID-19 inspection goal to 10% of all inspections from 5%. From March 2021 to this past March, the first year of the NEP, COVID-19 inspections accounted for 7% of all inspections.

The agency has issued about 1,200 COVID-19-related citations since the pandemic began in February 2020, with assessed penalties totaling around \$7.2 million. OSHA notes that it has “obtained relief for more than 400 employees who filed coronavirus retaliation claims against employers, exceeding \$5 million in monetary awards to employees.”

Top labor official says COVID remains priority for OSHA

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s National Emphasis Program for worker safety in the COVID-19 pandemic will be extended past its upcoming July expiration date, Doug Parker, OSHA’s assistant secretary of labor, told attendees Wednesday during a Q&A at the American Society of Safety Professionals’ annual conference in Chicago. “We’re about to announce its extension,” he said during the session, which also aired online. “We’re currently seeing hospitalizations on the increase in the country from COVID-19. And so we don’t believe that this is the time to let up on our activity.”

Mr. Parker, who served as chief of California’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health at the start of the pandemic and was sworn in to head federal OSHA in late 2021, said the pandemic will continue to be an “immediate focus” for the federal agency. OSHA hopes to introduce a permanent COVID-19 standard for health care by the end of 2022, he said. From there, the agency plans to continue work on an infectious disease standard, a process that began under the Obama Administration and stalled.

“It will be focused on health care (yet) the scope is undetermined. It may include other high-risk industries,” he said. “If we learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic, it's the importance of being prepared. And I think that if we had had a rule in place, we would have had better outcomes in health care.”

Other objectives for OSHA include creation of a standard to prevent heat illnesses, he said. “We have an average of almost 40 recorded reportable fatalities a year in related occupational heat,” he said. “We know that that’s a significant undercount, just because of the limits of our surveillance system, the fact that these are often classified as other types of fatalities or they’re just not recognized.”

Better recordkeeping is also a focus, he said. “We think that it’s critically important that in this age of data and information that we improve what I think is a very overall, pretty weak system of data collection on injuries and illnesses in this country,” he said.

Safety Initiative Goals:

As an AGC Nebraska Building Chapter member, are you participating with:

- 100% of all AGC members and other contractors on AGC jobsites enforcing OSHA standards as they apply to falls, electrical safety and possible another topic.
- 100% of all AGC members will have set their own company goals to improve safety in their firm and have a way to measure progress towards the goal.
- 100% of all AGC members will encourage and support all contractors on their jobsites to set their own company goals for improving safety.