



OSHA'S NEW INSPECTION GUIDANCE FOR INPATIENT HEALTHCARE SETTINGS CONTINUES TO RAISE THE COMPLIANCE BAR FOR NURSING AND RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES.

On June 25, 2015, the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) published its inspection guidance for inpatient healthcare settings, including nursing and residential care facilities. This is the second time in two months that OSHA has indicated its plan to intensify enforcement efforts in the healthcare industry. In April 2015, OSHA revised its guidelines regarding workplace violence faced by workers in the healthcare and social services fields.

OSHA has collected data indicating that inpatient healthcare settings have some of the highest injury rates and illness among industries nationwide. Many of these injuries are attributed to overexertion related incidents. In the health care and social assistance sector, 13% of injuries were due to workplace violence (i.e., physical assaults and threats of assault), over three times the national average in the overall private sector.

OSHA will be closely monitoring compliance with health and safety rules regarding:

- Safe patient handling.
- Workplace violence.
- Bloodborne pathogens.
- Tuberculosis.
- Slips, trips and falls.

Other hazards that will be in OSHA's sights in inpatient health settings include:

- Exposure to multi-drug resistant organisms, like MRSA.
- Exposure to hazardous chemicals, like sanitizers, disinfectants, anesthetic gases and hazardous drugs.

In addition to OSHA's recent, extensive guidance on workplace violence prevention, OSHA inspectors will be examining whether employers have done the following:

1. **Program Management**, such as systems for identifying and correcting hazards; an audit system, including participation by the workers; records evaluating the effectiveness of the program and efforts at ongoing improvement.
2. **Program Implementation**, such as standards for assessing patient/resident mobility; training and providing continuous reminders to the workers about the standards; adequacy and condition of assistive devices.
3. **Employee Training**, such as training the workers to recognize ergonomic hazards and report injuries in a timely manner; the company's process for abating those hazards; training in proper techniques and procedures to avoid exposure; demonstrations of competency to an OSHA inspector.

As was the case with responding to OSHA's recent workplace violence guidelines, taking proactive steps in conjunction with legal counsel can help providers avoid substantial penalties and improve the quality of life for their employees.