

Clearinghouse for state safety and health regs launched

Oregon and Washington are among just four states responsible for vast majority of all state occupational safety and health standards

A clearinghouse for all state occupational safety and health regulations and laws was launched on the Internet April 1.

The database is designed for workers, unions, employers, occupational safety and health researchers and advocates, and state and federal regulatory officials, as a tool to compare and contrast regulations and laws across different states and with existing federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules.

As of now, 25 states (including Oregon and Washington) and two U.S. territories have federally approved state OSHA plans. The database includes all state OSHA-enforced standards that have not been adopted iden-

tically from federal OSHA, and that protect workers from specific workplace safety and health hazards.

Every year, millions of work-related injuries and illnesses are reported, thousands of workers are killed on the job, and tens of thousands more die from occupational diseases. Safety and health regulations and laws can help prevent many of these deaths and injuries.

The 1970 federal Occupational Safety and Health Act established OSHA to protect workers from occupational safety and health hazards. The act also permitted states to substitute their own rulemaking and enforcement agencies for federal OSHA, as long as the state programs, also known as state OSHA plans, are "at least as effective" as the federal agency. This was intended as a way to allow states to address local needs and unique industries.

The database reveals that most of the 25 states have amended or supplemented one or more federal regulations, and several states have issued regu-

lations or laws protecting workers from hazards — such as heat stress, workplace violence, combustible dust and musculoskeletal injuries — that have not yet been addressed in a federal OSHA regulation.

Some key findings:

The number of state standards issued by each of the 25 state OSHA plans varies widely.

Oregon and Washington are among just four states (California, and Michigan are the other two) responsible for the vast majority of all state occupational safety and health standards. These four states have developed at least one chemical exposure limit that has never been adopted by federal OSHA.

Oregon and Michigan were noted for having especially informative websites, which compare their state standards with federal OSHA regulations, making it clear where they differ from the federal rules.

Washington is among three states that have developed standards protecting workers from heat stress. (California and Min-

nesota are the other two.)

Washington also is one of only a few states with standards to help prevent death and injury from workplace violence. (New Mexico and New York are the other two.)

California and Utah are the only states that have developed standards to prevent explosions from combustible dust.

California and Minnesota are the only states to enforce standards addressing safe patient handling requirements to minimize musculoskeletal injuries in health care workers. California also has a rule addressing ergonomics injuries more generally.

"This database shows that some state OSHA plans have been proactive and issued numerous regulations and laws that are a model for what is possible in other states and at federal OSHA," said Dr. Sammy Al-mashat, researcher with Public Citizen's Health Research Group.

Public Citizen and the Public Health Law Research program of the Robert Wood Johnson

Foundation provided a \$50,000 grant to produce the database. It is published on the program's LawAtlas website.

"We hope the database will be a useful resource ... to more easily identify states with certain standards and compare them with existing federal OSHA rules," said Keith Wrightson of the Public Citizen's Congress Watch division. Wrightson compiled the database with Al-mashat.

OSHA's 2014 TOP TEN Most Frequently Cited Violations

1. Fall protection
2. Hazard communication
3. Scaffolding
4. Respiratory protection
5. Powered industrial trucks
6. Lockout/tagout
7. Ladders
8. Electrical: wiring
9. Machine guarding
10. Electrical: systems design

ONLINE EXTRA

To view the complete data base, go online to: <http://www.citizen.org/hrg2251>



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Worker Memorial Day | April 28, 2015



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