



WORK

Your HR and Employment Law Update

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OSHA Vows Continued Enforcement As Work Fatalities Rise



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Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez has sworn to continue the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's ("OSHA") stepped up enforcement campaign in the construction and oil and gas industries

after newly released data showed the number of fatalities in those industries rose last year.

Overall, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ("BLS") found that 4,679 workers died last year, an increase of 2 percent compared with 2013. Workers in the transportation and material moving occupations (those who operate cranes, forklifts and conveyors) accounted for the most deaths last year—1,289. Second were construction workers, at 885. Meanwhile, the number of fatal work injury cases in the oil and gas industries rose 27 percent to 142. The oil and gas industries include extraction, drilling and support activities.

"BLS data shows fatalities rising in the construction sector (along with an overall increase in construction employment).

Dangerous workplaces also are taking the lives of a growing number of people in oil and gas extraction," said Perez. "That is why OSHA continues extensive outreach and strong enforcement campaigns in these industries."

Transportation accidents continued to be most common cause for occupational deaths, leading to 1,891 fatalities. Falls, slips and trips led to 793 deaths while workers being struck by equipment and other objects resulted in 708 deaths.

Perez's comments come on the heels of OSHA's release of its updated national emphasis program targeting industries with high numbers and rates of amputations. The directive includes a 90-day program during which establishments newly added to the targeting list will be offered outreach prior to inspection. OSHA compliance officers have been ordered to pay particular attention to potential employee exposure to nip points, pinch points, shear points, cutting actions, and other points of operation when inspecting machinery and equipment.

So what does this mean for employers? Employers can reduce the risks of enforcement by auditing and reviewing their safety manuals, training records, injury records and reporting guidelines to determine whether there is a need for program changes consistent with the OSHA mandates. It is better to know what needs to be fixed before an accident occurs or an OSHA inspector knocks on the door.

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