

June 28, 2005

What's OSHA Doing In The Healthcare Industry?

Last year, OSHA issued nearly a half million dollars in citation penalties in the Nursing and Personal Care Facilities Industry. Avoiding costly OSHA citations requires that you provide a safe workplace, and understand what OSHA might focus on in your business. Looking at last year's OSHA citations can give you insight as to where to focus your compliance activities.

Emphasis Area	Total Cost	Number Citations	Average Cost
Bloodborne Pathogens	\$204069	477	\$ 428
Electrical Safety	\$ 55345	110	\$ 503
Personal Protective Equipment	\$ 23152	96	\$ 241
Lockout/Tagout Procedures	\$ 21490	56	\$ 383
Medical Services and First Aid	\$ 21324	29	\$ 735
Machine Safety	\$ 14217	30	\$ 474

SIC 8050 (Nursing and Personal Care Facilities) for October 2003 - September 2004, www.osha.gov.

Bloodborne Pathogens

Violations of the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard comprised nearly half of the total number and cost of all citations. Exposure to the hazards of bloodborne pathogens can be minimized or eliminated using a combination of engineering and work practice controls, personal protective clothing and equipment, training, medical surveillance, Hepatitis B Vaccination, signs and labels, and other provisions. The OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard is very specific about rules and procedures for managing this hazard.

Electrical Safety

Electrical Safety issues were second in terms of frequency and cost to the healthcare industry. Improper or damaged extension cords, poor design, selection, and usage of equipment, lack of proper training, lack of necessary safeguards for personal protection, and improper wiring, all triggered costly citations.

Personal Protective Equipment

As the third most frequent and costly violation, OSHA found that employers were not providing necessary protective equipment for the job hazards, including safety glasses or goggles for eyes, the correct gloves, protective clothing, and protective shields and barriers. Where the employee furnishes his or her own protective equipment, it is the employer's responsibility to assure its adequacy on an on-going basis.

Lockout/Tagout

The Control of Hazardous Energy (Lockout/Tagout) Standard identifies the procedures necessary to safeguard employees from hazardous energy while they are servicing or performing maintenance on machines and equipment. Violations of this code include inadequate training on procedures, non-compliance with procedures, and lack of sufficient inspections of these procedures to assure their adequacy.

Medical Services and First Aid

It is the responsibility of each employer to ensure the availability of medical personnel for advice and consultation on matters of occupational health. While there were only 29 citations in this area, these citations were the most costly at an average of \$735. The correct and necessary First supplies must be readily accessible when required, be checked regularly, and damaged or expended items replaced. Suitable facilities for quick drenching or flushing of the eyes and body must be provided within the work area for immediate emergency use.

Machine Safety

These violations pertain to requirements for machines, tools, and equipment at your facility. The safe condition of tools and equipment used by all employees, including those furnished by employees, is the responsibility of the employer. One key area is keeping the manufacturers' guards on at all times. There are specific rules pertaining to specifications, usage, and maintenance requirements for many of the tools and equipment used in the healthcare industry.