



U.S. Department of Labor



Job Safety and Health IT'S THE LAW!

All workers have the right to:

- A safe workplace.
- Raise a safety or health concern with your employer or OSHA, or report a work-related injury or illness, without being retaliated against.
- Receive information and training on job hazards, including all hazardous substances in your workplace.
- Request a confidential OSHA inspection of your workplace if you believe there are unsafe or unhealthy conditions. You have the right to have a representative contact OSHA on your behalf.
- Participate (or have your representative participate) in an OSHA inspection and speak in private to the inspector.
- File a complaint with OSHA within 30 days (by phone, online or by mail) if you have been retaliated against for using your rights.
- See any OSHA citations issued to your employer.
- Request copies of your medical records, tests that measure hazards in the workplace, and the workplace injury and illness log.

This poster is available free from OSHA.

Contact OSHA. We can help.

Employers must:

- Provide employees a workplace free from recognized hazards. It is illegal to retaliate against an employee for using any of their rights under the law, including raising a health and safety concern with you or with OSHA, or reporting a work-related injury or illness.
- Comply with all applicable OSHA standards.
- Notify OSHA within 8 hours of a workplace fatality or within 24 hours of any work-related inpatient hospitalization, amputation, or loss of an eye.
- Provide required training to all workers in a language and vocabulary they can understand.
- Prominently display this poster in the workplace.
- Post OSHA citations at or near the place of the alleged violations.

On-Site Consultation services are available to small and medium-sized employers, without citation or penalty, through OSHA-supported consultation programs in every state.





Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that employers protect you from workplace hazards that can cause injury or illness. Controlling a hazard at its source is the best way to protect workers. However, when engineering, work practice and administrative controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection, employers must provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to you and ensure its use.

PPE is equipment worn to minimize exposure to a variety of hazards. Examples include items such as gloves, foot and eye protection, protective hearing protection (earplugs, muffs), hard hats and respirators.

Employer Obligations	Workers should:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Performing a "hazard assessment" of the workplace to identify and control physical and health hazards. ✓ Identifying and providing appropriate PPE for employees. ✓ Training employees in the use and care of the PPE. ✓ Maintaining PPE, including replacing worn or damaged PPE. ✓ Periodically reviewing, updating and evaluating the effectiveness of the PPE program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Properly wear PPE ✓ Attend training sessions on PPE ✓ Care for, clean and maintain PPE, and ✓ Inform a supervisor of the need to repair or replace PPE.

Employers Must Pay for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

On May 15, 2008, a new OSHA rule about employer payment for PPE went into effect. With few exceptions, OSHA now requires employers to pay for personal protective equipment used to comply with OSHA standards. The final rule does not create new requirements regarding what PPE employers must provide.

The standard makes clear that employers cannot require workers to provide their own PPE and the worker's use of PPE they already own must be completely voluntary. Even when a worker provides his or her own PPE, the employer must ensure that the equipment is adequate to protect the worker from hazards at the workplace.



Examples of PPE that Employers Must Pay for Include:

- Metatarsal foot protection
- Rubber boots with steel toes
- Non-prescription eye protection
- Prescription eyewear inserts/lenses for full face respirators
- Goggles and face shields
- Fire fighting PPE (helmet, gloves, boots, proximity suits, full gear)
- Hard hats
- Hearing protection
- Welding PPE



Payment Exceptions under the OSHA Rule

Employers are not required to pay for some PPE in certain circumstances:

- Non-specialty safety-toe protective footwear (including steel-toe shoes or boots) and non-specialty prescription safety eyewear provided that the employer permits such items to be worn off the job site. (OSHA based this decision on the fact that this type of equipment is very personal, is often used outside the workplace, and that it is taken by workers from jobsite to jobsite and employer to employer.)
- Everyday clothing, such as long-sleeve shirts, long pants, street shoes, and normal work boots.
- Ordinary clothing, skin creams, or other items, used solely for protection from weather, such as winter coats, jackets, gloves, parkas, rubber boots, hats, raincoats, ordinary sunglasses, and sunscreen
- Items such as hair nets and gloves worn by food workers for consumer safety.
- Lifting belts because their value in protecting the back is questionable.
- When the employee has lost or intentionally damaged the PPE and it must be replaced.

OSHA Standards that Apply

OSHA General Industry PPE Standards

- 1910.132: General requirements and payment
- 1910.133: Eye and face protection
- 1910.134: Respiratory protection
- 1910.135: Head protection
- 1910.136: Foot protection
- 1910.137: Electrical protective devices
- 1910.138: Hand protection

OSHA Construction PPE Standards

- 1926.28: Personal protective equipment
- 1926.95: Criteria for personal protective equipment
- 1926.96: Occupational foot protection
- 1926.100: Head protection
- 1926.101: Hearing protection
- 1926.102: Eye and face protection
- 1926.103: Respiratory protection

There are also PPE requirements in shipyards and marine terminals and many standards on specific hazards, such as 1910.1030: Bloodborne pathogens and 1910.146: Permit-required confined spaces.

OSHA standards are online at www.osha.gov.

Sources:

- *Employers Must Provide and Pay for PPE, New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC) Fact Sheet*
- *OSHA Standards, 1910.132(h) and 1926.95(d)*
- *Employer Payment for Personal Protective Equipment Final Rule, Federal Register: November 15, 2007 (Volume 72, Number 220)*

OSHA's Whistleblower Protection Program

OSHA's Whistleblower Protection Program enforces the provisions of more than 20 federal laws protecting employees from retaliation for, among other things, raising or reporting concerns about hazards or violations of various workplace safety and health, aviation safety, commercial motor carrier, consumer product, environmental, financial reform, food safety, health insurance reform, motor vehicle safety, nuclear, pipeline, public transportation agency, railroad, maritime, securities, tax, antitrust, and anti-money laundering laws. Employees who believe that they have experienced retaliation in violation of one of these laws may file a complaint with OSHA.

Whistleblower Laws Enforced by OSHA

Following is a list of statutes which OSHA enforces. Each statute has a different time frame in which a complaint can be filed.

- *Anti-Money Laundering Act (90 days)*
- *Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (90 days)*
- *Clean Air Act (30 days)*
- *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (30 days)*
- *Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 (180 days)*
- *Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (180 days)*
- *Criminal Antitrust Anti-Retaliation Act (180 days)*
- *Energy Reorganization Act (180 days)*
- *Federal Railroad Safety Act (180 days)*
- *Federal Water Pollution Control Act (30 days)*
- *International Safe Container Act (60 days)*
- *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (motor vehicle safety) (180 days)*
- *National Transit Systems Security Act (180 days)*
- *Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) (30 days)*
- *Pipeline Safety Improvement Act (180 days)*
- *Safe Drinking Water Act (30 days)*
- *Sarbanes-Oxley Act (180 days)*
- *Seaman's Protection Act (180 days)*
- *Section 402 of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (180 days)*
- *Section 1558 of the Affordable Care Act (180 days)*
- *Solid Waste Disposal Act (30 days)*
- *Surface Transportation Assistance Act (180 days)*
- *Taxpayer First Act (180 days)*
- *Toxic Substances Control Act (30 days)*
- *Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century (90 days)*

What Is Retaliation?

Retaliation is an adverse action against an employee because of activity protected by one of these whistleblower laws. Retaliation can involve several types of actions, such as:

- Firing or laying off
- Demoting
- Denying overtime or promotion
- Disciplining
- Denying benefits
- Failing to hire or rehire
- Intimidation or harassment
- Making threats
- Reassignment to a less desirable position or affecting promotion prospects
- Reducing pay or hours
- More subtle actions, such as isolating, ostracizing, mocking, or falsely accusing the employee of poor performance
- Blacklisting (intentionally interfering with an employee's ability to obtain future employment)
- Constructive discharge (quitting when an employer makes working conditions intolerable due to the employee's protected activity)
- Reporting the employee to the police or immigration authorities

Filing a Complaint

Employees who believe that their employers retaliated against them because they engaged in protected activity should contact OSHA as soon as possible because they must file any complaint within the legal time limits.

An employee can file a complaint with OSHA by visiting or calling their local OSHA office, sending a written complaint to the closest OSHA office, or filing a complaint online. No particular form is required and complaints may be submitted in any language.

Written complaints may be filed by fax, electronic communication, hand delivery during business hours, U.S. mail (confirmation services recommended), or other third-party commercial carrier.

The date of the postmark, fax, electronic communication, telephone call, hand delivery, delivery to a third-party commercial carrier, or in-person filing at an OSHA office is considered the date filed.

To file a complaint electronically, please visit: www.osha.gov/whistleblower/WBComplaint.

To contact an OSHA area office, employees should call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) to be connected to the closest area office or visit www.osha.gov/contactus/bystate to find local OSHA office address and contact information.

When OSHA receives a complaint, OSHA will first review it to determine whether certain basic requirements are met, such as whether the complaint was filed on time. If so, the complaint will be investigated in order to determine whether the employer retaliated against the employee for engaging in activity protected under one of OSHA's whistleblower laws. OSHA may also attempt to assist the employer and employee in reaching a settlement of the case.

Private-sector employees throughout the United States and its territories and employees of the United States Postal Service (USPS) who suffer retaliation because of occupational safety or health activity are covered by section 11(c) of the OSH Act. In addition, private-sector employees are also covered by laws in States which operate their own comprehensive occupational safety and health programs approved by Federal OSHA ("State Plans"). For information on the whistleblower provisions of the 22 State Plan States which cover private-sector employees, visit www.osha.gov/stateplans.

With the exception of employees of the USPS, public-sector employees (those employed as municipal, county, state, territorial, or federal workers) are not covered by the OSH Act. State and local government employees are covered by the whistleblower provisions of all the States with State Plans, including six States which cover only State and local government employees.

A federal employee who is not a USPS employee who wishes to file a complaint alleging retaliation due to disclosure of a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety or involving a violation of an occupational safety or health standard or regulation should contact the Office of Special Counsel (www.osc.gov). Such federal employees are also covered by their own agency's procedures for remedying such retaliation.

Public-sector employees who are unsure whether they are covered under a whistleblower law should call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) for assistance, or visit www.whistleblowers.gov.

Results of the Investigation

If OSHA determines that retaliation in violation of the OSH Act, *Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act*, or the *International Safe Container Act* has occurred, the Secretary of Labor may sue in federal district court to obtain relief. If OSHA determines that no retaliation has occurred, it will dismiss the complaint.

Under the other whistleblower laws, if the evidence supports an employee's complaint of retaliation, OSHA will issue an order requiring the employer, as appropriate, to put the employee back to work, pay lost wages, and provide other possible relief. If the evidence does not support the employee's complaint, OSHA will dismiss the complaint. After OSHA issues a decision, the employer and/or the employee may request a full hearing before an administrative law judge of the Department of Labor. The administrative law judge's decision may be appealed to the Department's Administrative Review Board (ARB); in significant cases the Secretary of Labor may review the ARB decision. Aggrieved parties may seek review of final DOL decisions by the courts of appeals.

Under some of the laws, an employee may file the retaliation complaint in federal district court if the Department has not issued a final decision within a specified number of days (180, 210 or 365 depending on the law).

To Get Further Information

To obtain more information on whistleblower laws, go to www.whistleblowers.gov.

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.



We Are OSHA



We Can Help

Workers' rights under the OSH Act

Workers are entitled to working conditions that do not pose a risk of serious harm. To help assure a safe and healthful workplace, OSHA also provides workers with the right to:

- **Ask OSHA to inspect their workplace;**
- **Use their rights under the law without retaliation;**
- **Receive information and training about hazards, methods to prevent harm, and the OSHA standards that apply to their workplace. The training must be in a language you can understand;**
- **Get copies of test results done to find hazards in the workplace;**
- **Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses; and**
- **Get copies of their medical records.**



Occupational Safety and Health Administration
U.S. Department of Labor

Who OSHA covers

Private sector workers

Most employees in the nation come under OSHA's jurisdiction. OSHA covers private sector employers and employees in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and other



U.S. jurisdictions either directly through Federal OSHA or through an OSHA-approved state program. State-run health and safety programs must be at least as effective as the Federal OSHA program. To find the contact information for the OSHA Federal or State Program office nearest you, call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) or go to www.osha.gov.

State and local government workers

Employees who work for state and local governments are not covered by Federal OSHA, but have OSH Act protections if they work in those states that have an OSHA-approved state program. The following 22 states or territories have OSHA-approved programs:

Alaska	Arizona	California
Hawaii	Indiana	Iowa
Kentucky	Maryland	Michigan
Minnesota	Nevada	New Mexico
North Carolina	Oregon	South Carolina
Tennessee	Utah	Vermont
Virginia	Washington	Wyoming
Puerto Rico		

Five additional states and one U.S. territory have OSHA-approved plans that cover public sector workers only:

Connecticut	Illinois	Maine
New Jersey	New York	Virgin Islands

Private sector workers in these five states and the Virgin Islands are covered by Federal OSHA.

Federal government workers

Federal agencies must have a safety and health program that meets the same standards as private employers. Although OSHA does not fine federal agencies, it does monitor federal agencies and responds to workers' complaints. The United States Postal Service (USPS) is covered by OSHA.



Not covered under the OSH Act:

- Self-employed;
- Immediate family members of farm employers who do not employ outside employees;
- Workplace hazards regulated by another federal agency (for example, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, the Department of Energy, or Coast Guard).

OSHA standards: Protection on the job



OSHA standards are rules that describe the methods that employers must use to protect their employees from hazards. There are OSHA standards for Construction work, Agriculture, Maritime operations, and General Industry, which are the standards that apply to most worksites. These standards limit the amount of hazardous chemicals workers can be exposed to, require the use of certain safe practices and equipment, and require employers to monitor hazards and keep records of workplace injuries and illnesses.

Examples of OSHA standards include requirements to provide fall protection, prevent trenching cave-ins, prevent some infectious diseases, assure that workers



safely enter confined spaces, prevent exposure to harmful substances like asbestos, put guards on machines, provide respirators or other safety equipment, and provide training for certain dangerous jobs.

Employers must also comply with the General Duty Clause of the OSH Act, which *requires employers to keep their workplace free of serious recognized hazards*. This clause is generally cited when no OSHA standard applies to the hazard.

Workers can ask OSHA to inspect their workplace

Workers, or their representatives, may file a complaint and ask OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or that their employer is not following OSHA standards. A worker can tell OSHA not to let their employer know who filed the complaint. **It is a violation of the OSH Act for an employer to fire, demote, transfer or retaliate in any way against a worker for filing a complaint or using other OSHA rights.**

Written complaints that are signed by a worker or their representative and submitted to the closest OSHA office are more likely to result in an on-site OSHA inspection. You can call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) to request a complaint form from your local OSHA office or visit www.osha.gov/pls/osha7/eComplaintForm.html to submit

the form online. Completed forms can also be faxed or mailed to the local OSHA office. Most complaints sent in online may be resolved informally over the phone with your employer.

When the OSHA inspector arrives, workers and their representatives have the right to:

- Go along on the inspection;
- Talk privately with the OSHA inspector; and
- Take part in meetings with the inspector and the employer before and after the inspection is conducted.

Where there is no union or employee representative, the OSHA inspector must talk confidentially with a reasonable number of workers during the course of the investigation.



When an inspector finds violations of OSHA standards or serious hazards, OSHA may issue citations and fines. A citation includes the methods an employer may use to fix a problem and the date by when the corrective actions must be completed. Workers only have the right to challenge the deadline for when a problem must be resolved. Employers, on the other hand, have the right to contest whether there is a violation or any other part of the citation. Workers or their representatives must notify OSHA that they want to be involved in the appeals process if the employer challenges a citation.

If you send in a complaint requesting an OSHA inspection, you have the right to find out the results of the OSHA inspection and request a review if OSHA does not issue citations.

Employer responsibilities

Employers have the responsibility to provide a safe workplace. **Employers MUST provide their employees with a workplace that does not have serious hazards and must follow all OSHA safety and health standards.**

Employers must find and correct safety and health problems. OSHA further requires employers to try to eliminate or reduce hazards first by making changes in working conditions rather than just relying on masks, gloves, earplugs or other types of personal protective equipment. Switching to safer chemicals, implementing processes to trap harmful fumes, or using ventilation systems to clean the air are examples of effective ways to get rid of or minimize risks.

Employers **MUST** also:

- Prominently display the official OSHA *Job Safety and Health – It's the Law* poster that describes rights and responsibilities under the OSH Act. **This poster is free and can be downloaded from www.osha.gov.**
- Inform workers about chemical hazards through training, labels, alarms, color-coded systems, chemical information sheets and other methods.
- Provide safety training to workers in a language and vocabulary they can understand.
- Keep accurate records of work-related injuries and illnesses.
- Perform tests in the workplace, such as air sampling, required by some OSHA standards.
- Provide required personal protective equipment at no cost to workers.*
- Provide hearing exams or other medical tests required by OSHA standards.



- Post OSHA citations and injury and illness data where workers can see them.
 - Notify OSHA within 8 hours of a workplace fatality or within 24 hours of any work-related inpatient hospitalization, amputation or loss of an eye (1-800-321-OSHA [6742]).
 - Not retaliate against workers for using their rights under the law, including their right to report a work-related injury or illness.
- * Employers must pay for most types of required personal protective equipment.

The law protects workers from retaliation when using their OSHA rights

The OSH Act protects workers who complain to their employer, OSHA or other government agencies about unsafe or unhealthful working conditions in the workplace or environmental problems. You cannot be transferred, denied a raise, have your hours reduced, be fired, or punished in any other way because you used any right given to you under the OSH Act. Help is available from OSHA for whistleblowers.

If you have been punished or retaliated against for using your rights, you must file a complaint with OSHA **within 30 days** from the date the retaliatory decision was both made and communicated to you. No form is needed, but you must call OSHA within 30 days of the alleged retaliation at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) and ask to speak to the OSHA area office nearest you to report the retaliation.

You have the right to a safe workplace

The *Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970* (OSH Act) was passed to prevent workers from being killed or seriously harmed at work. The law requires that employers provide their employees with working conditions that are free of known dangers. The Act created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which sets and enforces protective workplace safety and health standards. OSHA also provides information, training and assistance to workers and employers. Workers may file a complaint to have OSHA inspect their workplace if they believe that their employer is not following OSHA standards or there are serious hazards.

Contact us if you have questions or want to file a complaint. We will keep your information confidential. We are here to help you. Call our toll-free number at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) or go to www.osha.gov.



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**1-800-321-OSHA (6742) TTY 1-877-889-5627
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