

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), an agency of the United States Department of Labor, is responsible for assuring safe working conditions and enforcing safety standards throughout the country. Each year, OSHA publishes a list of the top ten most cited violations of their standards. For fiscal year 2017, the top violations were virtually the same as 2016, with the exception of Fall Protection – Training cracking the top 10. The most cited violation, for the sixth year in a row, was Fall Protection – General Requirements, with 6,072 citations issued. For context, the next most cited violation was Hazard Communication, with 4,176 violations.

Fall-related injuries were already three (scaffolding, ladders, and fall protection-general) of the top ten over the last decade, and now these violations amount to nearly half of the most commonly issued OSHA citations.

"Fall-related injuries are some of the most common that we encounter in our practice," noted workers' compensation attorney Steven Corriveau. "Often, these are injuries that could have, and should have, been prevented through better protection and safety practices. Unfortunately, these injuries are also often some of the most severe that we come across."

OSHA is authorized by federal law to issue workplace health and safety standards, which covered employers are responsible for abiding by. Employers are also responsible for complying with the General Duty Clause, which requires employers to keep their place of employment "free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious harm."

OSHA is also responsible for enforcing its standards on covered employers, and violations are met with citations and fines. Inspections are routinely performed for high-hazard industries or worksites with higher rates of injury and illness and may also be triggered by a workplace fatality, hospitalizations, and complaints.

The top ten list is published annually to give employers "a place to start for finding and fixing hazards," and "to address the biggest safety risks facing their employees." According to National Safety Council President and CEO Deborah Hersman, "the OSHA Top 10 is more than just a list; it is a blueprint for keeping workers safe."