

Understanding Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Special Emphasis Programs

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) establishes special emphasis programs (SEPs) to lower risks and mitigate hazards in high-hazard industries. SEPs are periodically-changing, temporary programs created to assist OSHA's enforcement arm in addressing workplace hazards. SEPs are based on workplace injury and illness rates, fatality rates, OSHA inspection activity, and identified hazards. This guide describes different SEP types and provides an overview of current SEPs.



OSHA has Directives which establish policies and procedures for inspecting workplaces under each SEP

Review the OSHA Directives at: [OSHA - Enforcement](#)

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TYPES OF SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS

National Emphasis Programs (NEPs)	A focus on specific hazards and high-hazard industries (e.g., industries that have experienced either frequent incidents or incidents with catastrophic consequences) across the country
Local Emphasis Programs (LEPs)	Enforcement strategies designed and implemented at the regional office and/or area office levels; vary by OSHA Region
Severe Violator Enforcement Program (SVEP)	A focus on inspecting employers who have demonstrated indifference to their OSH Act obligations through willful, repeated, or failure-to-abate violations

NATIONAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS

NEPs apply to all states and territories where OSHA has direct jurisdiction. OSHA NEPs target either high-hazard industries or specific hazards. You need to periodically check OSHA's NEPs to look for changes and new targets applicable to your workplace practices. Visit [OSHA](https://www.osha-slc.gov) for additional information on NEPs and review the following tables for an overview of current targets.



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NEPs for High-Hazard Industries

Industry	OSHA Instruction	Date Issued	Concern	Key Points of Emphasis
Combustible Dust	CPL 03-00-008 - Combustible Dust NEP	03/11/2008	May cause a deflagration (e.g., sudden, rapid burning), other fires, or explosion	Includes metal dust (e.g., aluminum, magnesium), wood dust, plastic dust, organic dust (e.g., flour, walnut)
Coronavirus (COVID-19)	DIR 2021-03 (CPL 03) – Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)	07/07/2021	Workers with high frequency, close contact exposures during the pandemic; retaliation against employees for reporting COVID-19 exposure concerns	Establishments with large numbers of workers with increased potential exposure to COVID-19
Hazardous Machinery	CPL 03-00-022 - NEP on Amputations in Manufacturing Industries	12/10/2019	Amputations related to the control of hazardous energy, general machine guarding, woodworking machinery, mechanical power presses, and mechanical power-transmission apparatus	May apply to wood container and pallet manufacturing, sheet metal work manufacturing, machine shops
Heat	CPL 03-00-024 – Outdoor and Indoor Heat-Related Hazards NEP	04/08/2022	The total number of heat-related fatalities may be underreported and improperly diagnosed – increases in heat-related OSHA inspections and fatality investigations	Working outdoors in a local area experiencing a heat wave, or working indoors near radiant heat sources, such as iron and steel mills and foundries

Hexavalent Chromium (Cr(VI))	CPL 02-02-076 - NEP for Hexavalent Chromium	02/23/2010	Confirmed human carcinogen with increased risk of lung and nasal cancer, airway/skin sensitization, asthma, nasal and skin ulcerations, and eye irritation	Found in dyes, paints, inks, plastic, anticorrosive agents (e.g., paints, primers, surface coatings), electroplating using chromic acid, and welding, brazing, and cutting of stainless steel or other metals
Lead	CPL 03-00-009 - NEP for Lead	08/14/2008	A potent, systemic poison affecting body systems, including damage to blood-forming, nervous, urinary, and reproductive systems	Found in paint, gasket materials, lead acid batteries, metal/metal parts, solder, or ammunition
Primary Metal Industries	CPL 03-00-018 - NEP for Primary Metal Industries	10/20/2014	Overexposure to chemical and physical (e.g., heat, noise) hazards	Targets foundries and those manufacturing nails, insulated wires/cables, steel piping, copper, and aluminum products
Process Safety Management (PSM)	CPL 03-00-021 - PSM Covered Chemical Facilities NEP	01/17/2017	Catastrophic releases at facilities with highly hazardous chemicals in amounts at, or greater than, the threshold quantities listed in OSHA 29 CFR 1910.119, Appendix A	Targets establishments like ammonia that meet the criteria in OSHA 29 CFR 1910.119
Shipbreaking	CPL 03-00-020 - OSHA's NEP on Shipbreaking	03/07/2016	Hazards during shipbreaking and ship recycling (e.g., asbestos removal, metal cutting, fuel/oil removal, confined space entry)	Targets U.S. Navy /Coast Guard and Department of Transportation Maritime Administration vessels under contract and commercial shipbreaking
Silica, Crystalline	CPL 03-00-023 - NEP for Respirable Crystalline Silica	02/04/2020	Suspected human carcinogen (lung); can also cause silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and kidney disease	Generated during abrasive sand blasting, as well as cutting, sawing, grinding, drilling, or crushing of stone, rock, concrete, brick, block, and mortar
Trenching & Excavation	CPL 02-00-161 - NEP on Trenching and Excavation	10/01/2018	Hazards likely to cause serious injuries and fatalities during these operations	Targets construction industry to ensure compliance with OSHA 29 CFR 1926 - Subpart P, Excavations

LOCAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS

Each of the ten OSHA regions have LEPs, all depending on the hazards they commonly see in their local workplaces. The LEPs may apply to a single area office or an entire region. LEPs applicable to an entire region are typically called Regional Emphasis Programs. Visit [OSHA](#) for additional information on LEPs by Region. Some LEP program examples are provided in the table below.

Examples of LEP Programs		
Fall Hazards	Federal Agencies	Noise and Respiratory Hazards
Health High Hazard – Top 50	Powered Industrial Vehicles	Automotive Services
Fall Hazards in Construction	Heat Illnesses	Ship and Boat Building and Repair
Cranes used in Construction, General Industry, and Maritime Employment		



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SEVERE VIOLATOR ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS

OSHA provides policies and procedures to hold employers accountable when they demonstrate resistance or indifference to OSH Act obligations. These situations occur when organizations commit willful, repeated, or failure-to-abate violations related to fatalities or catastrophic situations, exposure to the most severe occupational hazards (e.g., high-emphasis hazards), exposure to hazards related to the release of highly hazardous chemicals, and for egregious enforcement actions. Become familiar with these policies and procedures by reviewing [OSHA](#) for additional information regarding the SVEP.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smcx.org/>.