

# How Safe Is Your Hospital for Workers?



## Learn More and Take Action

Your workers are your best asset.

### How well are you protecting them?

Injuries and illnesses come at a high cost. When an employee gets hurt on the job, hospitals pay in many ways:

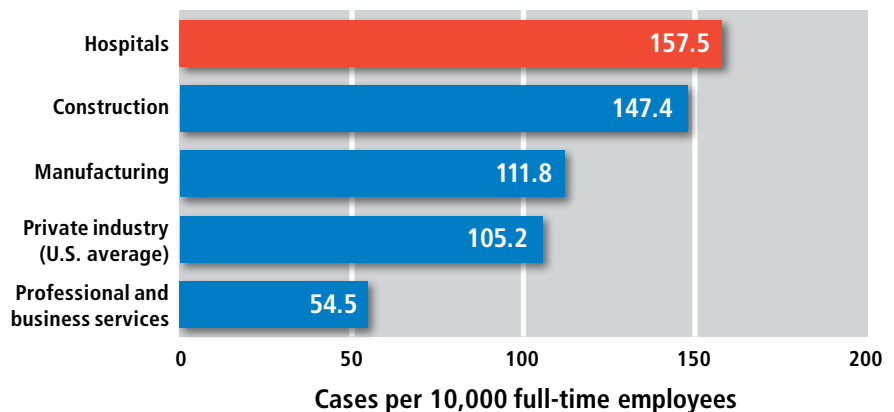
- Workers' compensation must cover lost wages and medical costs. The average hospital experiences \$0.78 in workers' compensation losses for every \$100 of payroll. Nationwide, that is a total annual expense of \$2 billion!\*
- Temporary staffing, backfilling, and overtime may be needed when injured employees miss work.
- Turnover costs are incurred when an injured employee quits. It costs money to recruit, hire, and train their replacement.
- Productivity and morale decrease as employees become physically and emotionally fatigued.

To learn more about how to protect your workers from injuries and illnesses and learn what resources are available to help, visit [www.osha.gov/dsg/hospitals](http://www.osha.gov/dsg/hospitals).

**D**id you know that a hospital is one of the most hazardous places to work? In 2011, U.S. hospitals recorded 58,860 work-related injuries and illnesses that caused employees to miss work.\* In terms of lost-time case rates, it is more hazardous to work in a hospital than in construction or manufacturing.

Hospitals have serious hazards, including: lifting, transferring, and repositioning patients; violence; needlesticks; and other concerns. Hospital work takes place in an unpredictable environment with a unique culture. Caregivers feel an ethical duty to "do no harm" to patients, and some will even put their own safety and health at risk to help a patient.

### Injuries and Illnesses Resulting in Days Away from Work, 2011



Data source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Most injuries result from a few well-known hazards.** Nearly half (48 percent) of injuries resulting in days away from work are caused by overexertion or bodily reaction, which includes motions such as lifting, bending, or reaching.\* These motions often relate to patient handling. The resulting injuries are often musculoskeletal in nature.

**Workplace safety also affects patient care.** Manual lifting can injure caregivers and also put patients at risk of falls, fractures, bruises, and skin tears. Caregiver fatigue, injury, and stress are tied to a higher risk of medication errors and patient infections.\*

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has created a suite of resources to help hospitals understand workplace safety needs, implement safety and health management systems, and enhance their safe patient handling programs. Read on to learn more about the resources available.



**OSHA**  
Occupational Safety  
and Health Administration

U.S. Department of Labor  
[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) • (800) 321-OSHA (6742)  
OSHA 3688 - 09/2013

\* Injury and illness rates presented above come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The workers' compensation payroll rate comes from a national survey conducted by Aon Risk Solutions. The connections between caregiver and patient safety have been documented in the published literature. For more detailed source citations, see "Facts About Hospital Worker Safety" at [www.osha.gov/dsg/hospitals](http://www.osha.gov/dsg/hospitals).

## OSHA has developed tools to help.

Learn best practices to reduce workplace injuries while saving money and improving patient care. Visit [www.osha.gov/dsg/hospitals](http://www.osha.gov/dsg/hospitals) for resources in three key areas:

### Understanding the Problem

- **Worker Safety in Your Hospital: Know the Facts.** This four-page booklet provides a concise summary of injury and illness rates, the major causes of injuries, costs, and solutions. It is a high-level overview sprinkled with examples to inspire hospital administrators and staff to take action.
- **Facts About Hospital Worker Safety.** This compendium presents data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers' compensation insurers, and detailed studies. For safety managers and others who want to explore the issue in depth, this booklet offers a comprehensive look at how hospital workers are getting hurt, which occupations are most at risk, how much these injuries cost (including "hidden" costs), and how thorough recordkeeping can help you identify problems and solutions.
- **How Safe Is Your Hospital for Workers? A Self-Assessment.** This three-page fillable questionnaire encourages data-driven self-evaluation by providing an opportunity for top administrators to talk with safety managers to find out how your injury rates compare with hospitals nationwide—and how these injuries affect your bottom line.

### Solution: Safety and Health Management Systems

- **Integrating Patient and Workplace Safety Programs: Lessons from High-Performing Hospitals.** This brief summary for hospital administrators uses real-world examples to demonstrate the value of a systematic process for proactively addressing workplace safety.
- **Safety and Health Management Systems and Joint Commission Standards: A Comparison.** This table shows how core elements of a safety and health management system relate to Joint Commission hospital accreditation standards. You will see that safety and health can easily be integrated into existing Joint Commission compliance plans.
- **Hospital Safety and Health Management System Self-Assessment Questionnaire.** This detailed tool can help safety managers determine how many of the recommended elements of a safety and health management system are in place at your hospital and identify opportunities for improvement.
- **Safety and Health Management Systems: A Road Map for Hospitals.** This guidebook describes the six core elements of a safety and health management system and provides strategies for implementing them in a hospital setting. It features "success stories" and best practices from a variety of hospitals.

### Solution: Safe Patient Handling

- **Safe Patient Handling Tools and Resources.** OSHA's website includes a "road map" for reviewing and improving your hospital's safe patient handling policies, programs, and equipment. This website provides links to a variety of helpful tools and resources.
- **Safe Patient Handling Programs: Effectiveness and Cost Savings.** This overview for administrators lays out the financial benefits of implementing and sustaining a safe patient handling program.
- **Safe Patient Handling: A Self-Assessment.** This two-page fillable questionnaire can help administrators and safety managers review their patient handling injury rates, examine existing policies and programs, and identify areas of concern and opportunities for improvement.
- **Safe Patient Handling: Busting the Myths.** This document lists common myths, barriers, and concerns about safe patient handling, and it provides the facts to disprove them.
- **Safe Patient Handling Program Checklist.** This customizable document includes a helpful list of factors to consider when starting or evaluating an existing safe patient handling program, based on lessons learned and best practices from various hospitals.
- **Safe Patient Handling Programs: Learn from the Leaders.** Brief profiles describe how five hospitals have implemented safe patient handling programs and successfully reduced worker injuries, reduced costs, and improved patient care.
- **Need a Lift? Just Ask!** This poster was designed to engage patients and their families and educate them about safe patient handling policies and equipment. Your hospital can customize this poster and post it in patient rooms.