

OSHA's New FEDTARG Program

When the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 became law, it ushered in a new era of protection for workers. The Act initiated a federal program that studied work-related accidents and held business accountable for workplace safety. By April 1971, the regulatory agency we know as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) had been created, with the specific focus of reducing work-related fatalities and injuries. In the five decades since its creation, OSHA has established industry safety standards, conducted workplace inspections, investigated work-related accidents and injuries and fined businesses for violations of federal work safety standards.

In November 2010, OSHA reported that its Federal Agency Targeting Inspection Program (FEDTARG) would continue to inspect federal agency work sites through 2011.

FEDTARG, established in 2008, was born out of an Office of Accountability report that revealed that field inspectors found numerous OSHA safety and health standard violations at high-hazard federal work sites. As part of the continuing initiative, OSHA reports that it will inspect federal agencies reporting between 20 to 100-plus lost time cases (LTC). Qualifying LTC cases will include those situations in which federal workers lose time beyond the date of the original injury. OSHA seeks to inspect all federal work sites that report more than 99 LTCs within the reporting period. The work safety agency will target half of those federal establishments with 50 to 99 cases and one-tenth of those with 49 or fewer incidents.

Continuing the FEDTARG program will offer great benefits and potential cost-savings in lost time and medical costs for injured federal workers. In 2009, nearly 900,000 injuries and illness cases were reported among state and local government

workers. Rates of injury in the federal sector are significantly higher than those for private-sector workers. In 2010, the Department of Labor (DOL) reported more than 100,000 new federal employee compensation cases. Under the Federal Employee Compensation Act programs, \$2.86 billion in benefits for almost 251,000 workers and their families have been paid for work-related illness and injuries. The majority of these benefits cover wage loss, medical and rehabilitative services and death benefit payments.

The safety of all American workers, governmental or otherwise, should be a matter of public concern. Continuing OSHA's FEDTARG program does more than create safer and healthier work environments for federal workers and contractors. It also works to relieve taxpayers of some of the significant burden of supporting injured federal workers by reducing risks for workplace injuries. As long as federal agencies fail to uphold their obligations to maintain safe and healthy worksites, OSHA's FEDTARG initiatives will be necessary.