

# Patient handling requirements update

By Alden Hoffman, OSHA Management Team Director, Health

Last July, this newsletter informed readers that facilities covered under the 2007 Safe Patient Handling statute had until Jan. 1, 2011, to achieve the goal of minimizing manual lifting. The facilities covered in Minnesota Statutes § 182.6551 through 182.6553 include hospitals, outpatient surgical centers and nursing homes.

Two issues have emerged since the July edition was published. The first has been about the use of gait belts. While often used by caregivers to assist during patient transfers, they are not designed for lifting patients and are not considered a “lifting device” by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) nor Minnesota OSHA (MNOSHA).



The second issue has been about a U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, decision in July 2010 to remove a 64-year exemption for youth to operate power-driven lifting devices less than one ton in capacity. This was done following a NIOSH recommendation, one that did not specifically include patient lifting devices. Due to concerns expressed by various stakeholders, the matter is being reviewed again by the federal Wage and Hour Division.

Compliance assistance and a model program are available from MNOSHA Workplace Safety Consultation, online at [www.dli.mn.gov/WSC/SPHlegislation.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/WSC/SPHlegislation.asp).

**SOII sauce** Interesting findings from the  
Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses

**'Got a license for that thing?'**

Vehicles were reported as the injury source for an estimated 1,280 of the 17,380 private-sector cases with one or more days away from work in 2009. And what was the most frequently reported vehicle involved in work-related injuries? Not trucks (300 cases), but carts, dollies and handtrucks (430 cases). During the 2003 to 2009 period, there were nearly 2,900 days-away-from-work (DAFW) cases involving carts, dollies and handtrucks, an average of 410 cases reported annually.

Here's a quick profile of the DAFW involving carts, dollies and handtrucks from 2003 through 2009.

- Twenty-seven percent of the injured workers were between 45 and 54 years old, followed by 17 percent between 35 and 44 years old.
- Forty-six percent of the workers had been working at their job for more than five years.
- Half of the injuries were sprains and strains, followed by bruises and contusions, with 13 percent of the cases.
- The most commonly injured body parts were the back (31 percent) and feet and toes (11 percent).
- The injuries were most often the result of the worker's overexertion (58 percent), getting caught in the dolly or cart (17 percent), and being struck by the dolly or cart (13 percent).

