

SIGNATURE PROJECTS

OSHA Express

In Oct. 2023, Minnesota OSHA (MNOSHA) Compliance launched a new case management system, OSHA Express, replacing the federal OSHA Information System (OIS). OSHA Express offers several advantages over OIS, including:

- Full document and case file management capability
- Complete data migration
- Inspection file review capability
- Configurable forms and templates, workflows and data retention schedules
- Fully auditability
- Dashboard capability
- Exportable case files
- All reports available in real time
- Integration with Minnesota's financial system, SWIFT
- SOD/EOD data file transfer with federal OIS
- Customization to meet Minnesota-specific requirements
- Familiar interface to previous system, reducing training and transition time

Since its launch, MNOSHA has made several enhancements to OSHA Express. These include integrating higher penalties with the federal OSHA rapid response procedure; connecting to Minnesota's financial system, SWIFT, to enable online fine payments; and streamlining data migration for discrimination cases to federal OSHA, along with other administrative processes.

2024 LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

As the result of legislation passed in July 2024, MNOSHA saw updates to the following topics.

- **Surgical Smoke:** Beginning Jan. 1, 2025, health care employers must implement requiring surgical smoke evacuation systems policies, per Minnesota Statutes section 182.678. MNOSHA Compliance will enforce the requirement.
- **Ergonomics Safety Grant Program:** Effective July 1, 2023, this program awards matching funds up to \$10,000 to health care, meatpacking and warehousing employers under Minnesota Statutes section 182.677. One-time funding of \$2 million from the state's general fund is available for employers in these industries for projects designed to reduce the risk of ergonomic injury to their employees. Since the program's inception, 79 applicants have received a total of \$750,000. Funds will be available to these covered industries until June 30, 2026, or until all funds are exhausted.

MNOSHA is committed to maintaining a strong, well-trained workforce.

HIRING AND TRAINING

Over the past two years, the agency has increased hiring of safety investigators and industrial hygienists to ensure all workers in Minnesota have a safe and healthy workplace.

New investigators bring a wide range of safety and health experience. After being hired, they complete MNOSHA's extensive training program, which includes classroom instruction, review of federal and state standards, and on-the-job investigative observation and participation. Investigators also attend in-depth courses through the federal OSHA Training Institute (OTI). Throughout their training, new hires are paired with experienced staff for mentoring and are closely supervised by trainers. Continuing education courses are provided throughout their careers.

In FFY24, MNOSHA focused on expanding its field staff, hiring 13 new employees — bringing the two-year total to 26. This included the addition of a full-time discrimination investigator and a new discrimination supervisor, increasing the team to three investigators to handle the increase in intake.

MNOSHA also hired a new supervisor to lead its training group. The role oversees hiring,

classroom and field training for new and existing investigative staff members. The addition of this position has helped streamline the hiring process among the various units, such as the Department of Labor and Industry's Financial Services and Human Resources, and Minnesota's enterprise-wide Minnesota IT Services.

To further support staff development, MNOSHA created and filled a new industrial hygienist training officer position. This role supports general training needs and focuses on training new staff in equipment use, sampling methods and the development of industrial hygiene reports. Together, the training supervisor and industrial hygienist training officer strengthen MNOSHA's ability to mentor and develop its workforce.

MNOSHA continues to invest in professional development by utilizing OSHA Training Institute courses for investigative staff. In FY24, the agency provided on-site, state-specific training and enrolled staff in 23 OTI courses, both in person and virtually. A total of 52 staff members participated, and MNOSHA hosted two OTI classes in Minnesota. These efforts underscore the agency's commitment to maintaining best-in-class training for its field staff.

SAFETY GRANTS

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry's MNOSHA Workplace Safety Consultation (WSC) administers the state's Safety Grant Program, which provides reimbursement funding grants of up to \$10,000 to employers incorporating hazard controls designed to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses while enhancing workplace safety and health.

This entirely state-funded grant program operates on Minnesota's fiscal year (July through June) and is structured in into six two-month cycles. As part of the application process, grantees must provide detailed information about their project, including a hazard assessment and a description of how the project will improve employee safety and health.

Grant applications are ranked and scored individually, with priority consideration given to industries with significant hazard exposures. Effective April 16, 2025, priority will be given to projects addressing:

- Cave-in protection (excavation and trenching)
- Grain-handling hazards
- Fall prevention in residential construction
- Struck-by and crushed-by prevention (e.g., backup cameras)
- Workplace violence hazards (public sector)
- Health hazard reduction (e.g., ventilation and engineering controls)



In FY24, WSC received 244 applications and awarded more than \$700,000 in grants to 130 applicants. Funded projects included:

- Fall protection systems
- Trench boxes
- Boom-supported aerial lifts
- Fixed ladder cages
- Exhaust ventilation systems
- Ergonomic material-lifting equipment
- Respiratory protection and other PPE
- Patient-lifting devices
- Hazardous-atmosphere detection equipment

When considering potential future impacts of the Safety Grant Program, WSC expects to continue endorsing impactful projects to bolster workplace safety and health outcomes for workers across Minnesota.

EMPHASIS PROGRAMS

In FFY24, MNOSHA conducted 781 programmed inspections — 99% of which were under 17 local and national emphasis programs. Local emphasis programs targeted the public sector, foundries, grain facilities, meatpacking, occupational noise and the state's top 50 health hazards.

Using the health care emphasis, meat packing emphasis and the national warehouse programs, MNOSHA Compliance continues to conduct ergonomics inspections in these covered industries. The ergonomics statute, which became effective January 2024, requires a written program, annual evaluation, employee training, employee involvement, reference to the ergonomics program in the A Workplace Accident and Injury Reduction (AWAIR) program and maintenance of specific records, including a log of musculoskeletal disorders, a first aid log and training certification. All employers covered by this statute are prohibited from maintaining any program, policy or practice that discourages employees from reporting injuries, hazards or safety and health standard violations, including ergonomics-related hazards and symptoms of musculoskeletal disorders.

Warehouse workers lobbied the state Legislature for rules to be put in place to keep them from having repetitive-stress injuries. State legislators felt their concerns were valid and needed to be addressed. From when these statutes were put in place, 72 citations have been issued involving the new statutes involving ergonomics and warehouse worker distribution worker safety.

ENFORCEMENT

[Your Lake Aquatic Plant Management, LLC](#)

Six employees were performing underwater weed removal when one worker failed to resurface. The worker was later found deceased 15–20 feet underwater with their regulator out. MNOSHA Compliance cited the employer for lacking:

- Dive team member training
- CPR training
- A designated dive-site employee
- A safe practice manual
- A standby diver

MNOSHA issued five willful citations totaling \$730,369 — the largest penalty issued to date.

This was the second workplace fatality involving scuba diving equipment in aquatic weed removal since June 2022. In response, MNOSHA issued a hazard-notification letter in July 2024 to employers in the industry, outlining compliance requirements under Subpart T of the Commercial Diving Standard (29 CFR 1910). The letter also encouraged employers to seek free consultation services from WSC.

[Wayne Transports, Inc.](#)

An employee was found deceased at the bottom of a ladder inside a tank trailer. MNOSHA issued 12 serious citations, including 10 permit-required confined space violations, and cited the employer for lack of a safety committee and missing safety data sheets. Nine citations were classified as “cause and contribute.” Total penalties amounted to \$621,600.

Smith Foundry Company, Inc.

Following a referral from another government agency, MNOSHA cited the employer for:

- An inadequate respiratory protection program
- Lack of hazard communication training
- Three overexposure violations
- Failure to conduct initial exams for employees exposed to crystalline silica
- An incomplete crystalline silica program

MNOSHA Compliance issued seven serious citations, with \$15,300 in penalties.

Performance Food Group, Inc. dba Performance Food Service

This health inspection was part of the Warehousing National Emphasis Program. MNOSHA issued six serious citations and one nonserious citation — totaling \$32,550 — for lack of fall protection and multiple violations of Minnesota Statutes 182.677 (ergonomics).

Amazon Warehouse

In April 2024, MNOSHA Compliance issued two serious citations, including a general duty clause violation related to ergonomic hazards and one violation of the warehouse distribution worker safety law. The inspection found Amazon did not protect employees from ergonomic hazards while selecting, sorting, packaging and shipping products in the outbound process and Amazon Fulfillment Engine.

Additionally, warehouse employees were required to meet production quotas without being provided written copies of those quotas in advance. Amazon has contested the citations.

OUTREACH

Presentations

In FFY24, MNOSHA Compliance conducted 80 presentations reaching 3,558 participants. MNOSHA continues to offer both virtual and in-person presentations and remains focused on improving communication with immigrant and other hard-to-reach employers and employees. The agency employs investigators fluent in English, Somali and Spanish and provides written outreach materials in multiple languages in coordination with the Department of Labor and Industry's community services representative.

Construction Seminars

MNOSHA Compliance conducted five construction seminars during FFY24, attended by 395 participants. The Construction Seminar series was developed to help construction industry staff responsible for worksite safety and provides a platform to stay current on MNOSHA standards. Seminars, offered both virtually and in person, allow participants to engage with speakers, peers and MNOSHA investigators. Topics included mental health in construction, excavation safety, mobile elevating work platforms, crane safety and silica hazards.

Safety Lines Newsletter

MNOSHA's quarterly newsletter, Safety Lines, featuring timely safety and health topics such as grain-bin hazards, safety grants, workplace safety consultation outreach, injury and illness recordkeeping, partnerships, rulemaking updates, carbon monoxide risks during winter, heat stress in summer and protections for young workers.

PARTNERSHIPS

Minnesota STAR (MNSTAR) Program

At the close of FY24, the MNSTAR Program had 36 active worksites – one in construction and 35 in general industry. Two companies achieved initial certification, two received full recertification and one employer withdrew from the program.

General industry participants had a three-year (2021–2023) average total recordable case rate 69% below the national rate and a “days away, restricted or transferred” (DART) rate 77% below the national average. The construction participant reported rates 20% below the national average for total recordable cases and 27% below the DART rate.



Minnesota STAR (MNSTAR) Program participant.

Partnerships with Construction Contractors

MNOSHA has construction safety and health partnerships with the Minnesota Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors (MN ABC) and Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Minnesota to help reduce the number of injuries, illnesses and fatalities in the construction industry.



Partnership with Construction Contractor.

In both programs, the partnership is managed by the association and has three levels. Level 1 requires the employer to maintain the minimum requirements of a safety and health program. Level 2 requires a more comprehensive safety and health program. Level 3 is MNOSHA’s Cooperative Compliance Partnership (CCP) program, whereby MNOSHA will provide compliance assistance for a specific project. To qualify, contractors must be at Level 2 for a minimum of one year and can then apply for participation in the CCP program for construction projects expected to last at least six months, but fewer than 18 months.

In FY24, MNOSHA partnered with 59 AGC and 27 ABC contractors at 20 Level 3 construction sites. The agency also continued its partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Ames/Kraemer Joint Venture on the I-35/I-535/Highway 53 Twin Ports Interchange reconstruction project in Duluth, which began in October 2020 and is scheduled through fall 2025.

MNOSHA’s partnership director also holds quarterly meetings with Level 3 contractors focused on accident prevention and sharing of best practices across participating employers.