

HR BRIEF

OSHA Proposes Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Standard

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently [announced](#) an unofficial version of the proposed [standard](#) to protect workers from heat injury and illness. If finalized, the new standard would apply to all employers conducting indoor and outdoor work in all general industry, construction, maritime and agricultural sectors where OSHA has jurisdiction, subject to limited exceptions. According to OSHA, the proposed rule would apply to approximately 36 million workers.

Background

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that almost 500 workers died from heat exposure in the United States from 2011-22, along with nearly 34,000 estimated work-related heat injuries and illnesses resulting in days away from work. If finalized, the proposed rule would be the first federal regulation specifically focused on protecting workers from extreme heat. The official version of the proposed rule will soon be published in the Federal Register.

Employer Obligations

The unofficial version of the proposed rule includes a number of safeguards employers would be required to implement. For example, the proposed standard includes requirements for:

- Identifying heat hazards
- Developing heat illness and emergency response plans
- Providing training to employees and supervisors
- Implementing work practice standards, including rest breaks, access to shade and water, and heat acclimatization for new employees

Next Steps for Employers

Once published, the proposed rule will undergo a 120-day comment period and subsequent review before it is finalized. If finalized, employers must comply with its requirements within 150 days of publication. Therefore, if the rule is finalized, employers will not be subject to its requirements until 2025. Employers may take steps now to prepare to comply with the standard. However, the proposed standard is likely to face pushback, so employers should monitor for updates and potential legal challenges.

2024 Midyear HR Trends to Monitor

By staying current on HR trends, employers can plan for changing compliance requirements, navigate new technologies and adapt to employee needs. Here are several HR trends to follow during the second half of 2024.

Labor Market Becomes More Employer-friendly

During record-high labor figures in 2021 and 2022, workers used their leverage to demand higher wages, better benefits and more career development opportunities—and were willing to change employers to do so. Today, economic indicators and labor metrics, such as job openings and employee quit rates, have moderated from all-time highs, showing that the worker-friendly employment landscape has recovered to give more leverage back to employers.

More States Prepare for Pay Transparency

Around a quarter of all U.S. workers are currently covered under pay transparency laws, and Illinois, Minnesota and Vermont have new laws set to take effect in 2025. Pay transparency rules have gradually spread and impacted organizations nationwide. Expect more employers to adapt their job posting and pay practices to meet requirements and keep up with worker demands.

AI Continues to Transform the Workplace

In 2024, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has gained even more traction. Research from Microsoft published in May 2024 found that the use of generative AI had doubled in just the most recent six months. Employers have integrated AI into several job roles and tasks, including HR practices, customer service and software development. However, lingering AI concerns remain regarding privacy, copyright infringement, and discrimination.

Summary

No organization is immune to developments driven by the economy, new technologies and the legislative landscape. As such, savvy employers are already monitoring the latest workplace trends and resonating with the current workforce. Contact us today for more resources.

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