



Workplace Safety

## OSHA Recordable vs. Reportable Incidents: How to Tell the Difference

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OSHA requires that for four specific incidents, businesses must make a report directly to the government.

Businesses must file reportable incidents with OSHA within stringent time frames.

Beyond the four reportable incident types, OSHA specifies that businesses write up what it defines as recordable incidents and maintain a running log of these injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

OSHA also requires that businesses maintain the recordable incident rate for their facilities.

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If you have more than 10 employees or work in an industry with a higher-than-average potential for hazardous incidents—which covers nearly all metalworking shops and manufacturing facilities—then you’re subject to OSHA recording and reporting rules.

OSHA’s recordable versus reportable incidents: What’s the difference? What must a manufacturing plant share with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration?

Shop floor chiefs and safety managers need to know the answer to both these questions and be aware of the recordkeeping and reporting requirements necessary to stay in compliance of government regulations.

Every business should start with this baseline: If a worker suffers an injury, illness or dies while on the job, the company will likely need to record it. That’s the most basic definition of a recordable incident.

### What Is an OSHA Reportable OSHA Incident?

OSHA is quite specific on what defines a reportable incident and what must be reported to the government within strict time restraints.

Workplace incidents such as in-patient hospitalization, amputations, heart attacks that happen to workers on the job, or work-related fatalities are all considered “serious” injuries and are reportable to OSHA. They must be reported directly to the agency—by phone or online—usually within hours.

A business must report any fatality within eight hours of learning of the death. It must notify OSHA of a serious reportable incident within 24 hours of becoming aware of it.

In-patient hospitalization encompasses all formal admissions to the in-patient service of a hospital or clinic for care or treatment, *notes KPA in a blog post*. "Hospitalization doesn't necessarily mean that the employee stays overnight; if they've been admitted for in-patient treatment, the event must be reported."

The reporting windows took effect when OSHA updated its recordkeeping standard, *29 CFR 1904*, in 2015.

The chief reason for the change was to help identify workplaces with potentially chronic safety issues, former OSHA administrator *David Michaels said in the fall of 2014*.

"Hospitalizations and amputations are sentinel events, indicating that serious hazards are likely to be present at a workplace and that an intervention is warranted to protect the other workers at the establishment," Michaels said. "Too often, after a fatality, when we inspect, we learn that other workers have already been injured at that establishment."

For more information, see OSHA's direct guidance on the *recordkeeping standard*.

*Read more: Head, Face and Eye Protection for Your Workers: What to Use and When*

**"Not keeping your TRIR low can cost you money, your reputation and a high-quality workforce and mean lost time dealing with annoying paperwork."**

## Is the Incident Work-Related?

According to the KPA's *OSHA reporting blog post*, some injuries and illnesses that seem to happen in the workplace are not, in fact, work-related incidents.

Here are some examples of non-work-related injuries and illnesses that do not need to be recorded:

- Injuries that occur to the general public
- Certain parking lot accidents
- Non-work-induced mental illnesses
- Colds and cases of flu
- Injuries that arise from personal meals or grooming
- Injuries that are self-inflicted or from self-medication
- Injuries occurring on the premises due to outside factors (such as a natural disaster)

## Handling COVID-19 Cases

The past year has seen employers do all they can to decrease the spread of COVID-19 inside their facilities and reduce its potential impact on their employees. Many have also grappled with the question of whether the illness is work-related and therefore recordable (or reportable) under OSHA's recordkeeping standards.

In late 2020, OSHA *added new questions and answers* on its frequently asked questions site that further clarify when employers must inform the agency if employees are hospitalized or die due to COVID-19.

The guidance explains that exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace is a work-related incident. OSHA says an employer must report the fatality within eight hours of determining both that the worker has passed away due to COVID-19 and that the death occurred within 30 days of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.

In June 2021, OSHA issued *emergency COVID-19 workplace safety rules* for employers, but they only applied to the health care industry and not to other high-risk workplaces. The Biden administration had initially *requested an emergency temporary standard* that covers all workplaces.

## How to Maintain OSHA-Compliant Recordable Incident Logs

Reports and logs are key elements of the OSHA recordkeeping rules. A business must maintain incident reports and logs on-site of all recordable incidents for at least five years. You're not required to submit these reports to OSHA, but you must be able to provide them if asked or during inspections.

Inspectors will typically review logs when they visit a facility. OSHA requires businesses to fill out and keep on-site *three types of forms* for documenting recordable incidents.

### 1. Form 301: Injury and Illness Incident Report

This is the form that a business must fill out for each recordable incident. You must document an incident within seven days of learning of it. This form includes the most detail about who was harmed and how.

### 2. Form 300: Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses

This form is a running log for recording all of a business's recordable incidents for a calendar year. It encapsulates the pertinent details from each 301 incident. It can help the safety team identify and address areas of concern so it can improve safety across the facility.

### 3. Form 300A: Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses

This form is a "dashboard" report of a facility's recordable incidents for a year by number of cases, days of lost work and incident type. OSHA requires that a site display it from February through April annually. This data is used to calculate the recordable incident rate.

OSHA requires that businesses give all workers the right to ask for and to review forms 300 and 300A in their entirety and be given access to much of Form 301, too, as specified in 29 CFR Part 1904.35.

Failure to maintain these records can lead to a \$7,000 fine by OSHA.

## What Are OSHA Recordable Incidents?

OSHA has explicitly outlined the type of incidents safety managers need to manage and document. Here's an official list of OSHA recordable incidents:

- Any work-related diagnosed case of cancer or chronic irreversible diseases.
- Any work-related injury resulting in punctured eardrums or fractured/cracked bones or teeth.
- Any work-related injury or illness requiring medical treatment beyond first aid.
- Any work-related injury or illness that results in loss of consciousness, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job.
- Any work-related fatality.

There are also special recording criteria for work-related cases involving needlesticks, sharps injuries,

medical removal, hearing loss and tuberculosis.

It's crucial to note that not every incident is recordable. Generally speaking, the case should be an event or exposure in the work environment that either caused or contributed to the resulting condition during work hours. If not, the case is not recordable.

If you're ever in question about whether you must log an incident, OSHA recommends that you contact the agency and ask. That's the easiest way to avoid a compliance issue.

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## **What Is the Total Recordable Incident Rate and Why Does it Matter?**

Beyond the incident reports required after an injury, illness or fatality—and the ongoing annual log of all recordable incidents—OSHA inspectors (and many others) use the recordable incident data to determine total recordable incident rate for a facility.

TRIR is a percentage rate of recordable incidents per 100 employees. To ***calculate your TRIR***, you multiply the number of recordable incidents by 200,000, then divide by the total number of hours worked in a year by your employees.

OSHA uses the 200,000 number because it represents the hours 100 employees would work in a year, or 100 employees times 40 hours a week times 50 weeks a year.

To help figure out your TRIR, use our helpful, ***interactive calculator for TCR and DART***.

The lower the number, the better your safety record. And TRIR is important because it's used in many different ways that can affect a business's bottom line, points out a ***Slice Products blog post***.

OSHA uses TRIR to monitor your business's progress on improving its safety record; investors weigh it when evaluating your business for funding; insurers look at it when setting rates; buyers inquire about it when selecting suppliers; and would-be workers check it out when applying for jobs and evaluating safety culture.

Given how much rides on this one number, it's worth paying close attention to it. Not keeping your TRIR low can cost you money, your reputation and a high-quality workforce and mean lost time dealing with annoying paperwork.

***Read more: Confined Space Safety: What's the Correct PPE, Equipment for Working in Hazardous Locations?***

***What insights do you have to share about handling recordable and reportable OSHA incidents? Share your thoughts in the comments below.***