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OSHA Cracks Down on Amputation Hazards

By Rich Christianson



The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Association is stepping up its enforcement of workplace hazards that could lead to painful and sometimes life-altering or even fatal injuries.

In 2015, the first year in which [employers were required to report severe, non-fatal work-related injuries](#) within 24 hours, OSHA said employers reported 10,388 severe injuries, including 7,636 hospitalizations and 2,644 amputations. Fifty-seven percent of accidents resulting in lost fingers, hands and other amputations occurred in manufacturing settings.

Last August, OSHA took fresh steps to reduce on-the-job accidents that lead to lost appendages and limbs by updating its [National Emphasis Program \(NEP\) on Amputations](#). The updated NEP targets wood, metal and other industries with high numbers and rates of amputations. The

directive is intended to compel high-risk employers to identify and eliminate serious workplace hazards and ensure that machines are fully equipped with proper guarding and lock-out/tag-out devices to prevent a machine from accidentally starting up during maintenance or when clearing a jam. Safety training, including for temporary workers, is also a component of the NEP.

Accidents Happen; Many Are Preventable

The NEP is built on a foundation of common sense. Unfortunately, well-intentioned employers or employees sometimes suffer a lapse of good judgment that leads to a severe injury. In worst case scenarios OSHA inspectors find workers operating under unsafe conditions. Missing or improper machine guards ranked ninth among violations cited by OSHA inspectors last year.

In my routine scans of OSHA violations reports, I have noticed a considerable uptick in the number of citations and fines handed out by OSHA inspectors for potential amputation hazards in recent months. Just take a look at some of the "Cited & Fined" examples at the bottom of this month's Washington Report as further evidence.

Manufacturers cited for amputation hazards by OSHA inspectors not only face costly fines, but are strong candidates for placement on [OSHA's Severe Violator Enforcement Program \(SVEP\)](#). Companies placed in the SVEP are subject to follow up inspections and heightened fines for repeat violations.

Woodworking machinery manufacturers and dealers have a vested interest in the safe use of their equipment. Aside from the moral aspect of safeguarding customers from accidents, maintaining a record of low or no operator accidents is a strong selling point and greatly minimizes the risk of being targeted for a product liability lawsuit.

California Proposes Slashing Wood Dust Emission Limits

The California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board will hold a public hearing on April 21 in Walnut Creek, CA, to air its proposal to dramatically reduce permissible levels of wood dust in the workplace.

The board proposes that permissible exposure limits of all hardwoods and softwoods with the exception of western red cedar be reduced from 5mg/m(3) to 1mg/m(3). The PEL for western red cedar would similarly be reduced by a factor of five from the current 2.5mg/m(3) to 0.5mg/m(3).

These limits are the same proposed by Cal OSHA five years ago when the [Inter-Industry Wood Dust Coordinating Committee \(IWDC\)](#), of which WMMA is a member, argued are "not readily achievable."

[Read more at Cal OSHA's website.](#)

Countertop Industry Caught in New Silica Rule Crosshairs



Fabricators of engineered stone countertops, including engineered stone, quartz and granite are subject to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) new rule developed to limit worker exposure to silica dust.

The National Association of Manufacturers, through its Manufacturers' Center for Legal Action (MCLA), quickly joined with the American Foundry Society in preparation for a likely court challenge to the new rule.

Linda Kelly, VP general counsel of MCLA, said,

"This regulation raises serious and significant legal questions, lacks economic and technical feasibility and justification and will cost billions. Relying on incredibly out-of-date data, this rule places undue burdens and irreparable harm on manufacturers, especially small and medium-sized businesses, some of which could be forced to shut their doors. Manufacturers are and have always been committed to safe workplaces, and we take pride in continuing to find ways to improve the work environment, but this unnecessary regulation is not the solution."

OSHA says about 2.3 million workers are exposed to respirable crystalline silica including more 2 million construction workers who drill, cut, crush or grind silica containing materials such as concrete and stone. The rule also impacts countertop fabricators, brick manufacturers and companies involved in hydraulic fracturing, aka fracking.

Breathing silica dust has been linked to lung cancer, silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and kidney disease. OSHA said the rule, when fully implemented June 23, 2018 will save more than 600 lives and prevent more than 900 new cases of silicosis each year. OSHA added that the final rule will result in net benefits of about \$7.7 billion annually.

Key provisions of the new rule include reducing the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crystalline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over an 8-hour shift; requiring employers to implement engineering controls such as water or ventilation to limit worker exposure to the PEL; and provide respirators when engineering controls cannot adequately limit exposure.

In a statement, [AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka praised the Obama Administration](#) for adopting the new rules. "The new silica rules are the most significant OSHA standards issued in decades." [Read more...](#)

Additional Resource: [OSHA-NIOSH Hazard Alert on Worker Exposure to Silica during Countertop Manufacturing, Finishing and Installation](#)

EPA Sends Proposed Formaldehyde Rule to OMB for Final Review

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has at long last sent its proposed formaldehyde rule to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for final review. OMB will decide if EPA's rule, which would create a national standard for formaldehyde emissions from composite wood panels, is not unreasonably economically burdensome to industry.

Upon acceptance by OMB, EPA plans to publish its final rule in May. The Federal Wood Industry Coalition (FWIC), which has urged EPA to adopt the California's formaldehyde rule, is continuing to monitor EPA's actions and its potential impact on panel manufacturers and their customers. FWIC is made up of more than a dozen trade associations and organizations including the Composite Panel Association, Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers and the WMMA. [Read more...](#)

Also read related blog by Jackson Morrill, president of the Composite Panel Association, posted on Woodworking Network: [Lumber Liquidators and composite wood: What's missing from this story?](#)

Roundup: News, Notes & More

Senate Passes Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016

The U.S. Senate voted 87-0 to pass the Defend Trade Secrets Act (S 1890) designed to help curb

How DNA Profiling Helped Convict Timber Thieves

The case against four suspects who pleaded guilty for their involvement in the illegal harvesting of big leaf

intellectual property theft by creating a harmonized federal standard to protect products manufacturers make and how they make them. The Senate vote was welcomed by the National Association of Manufacturers which intellectual property thefts cost U.S. manufacturers about \$250 billion a year. NAM is urging the U.S. House of Representative to quickly pass H.R. 3326, a bill that is identical to the Senate version. [Read more...](#)

Sierra Club Sues EPA to Act on MACT Rule

The Sierra Club is one of the plaintiffs suing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for failing to implement Maximum Achievable Control Technologies for 13 manufacturing processes as mandated by the Clean Air Act. Effected industries include those engaged in plywood and composite wood manufacturing; surface coating of wood building products; and surface coating of metal office furniture. The lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia requests that the EPA act immediately to require manufacturers to install technologies to reduce emissions of "toxic air pollution." [Read more...](#)

ITC Review Supports Furniture Antidumping Duties

The U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) determined that the antidumping duties imposed on Chinese furniture imports since 2005 are still warranted. In its second sunset review, ITC said, "revocation of the Order would likely lead to continuation or recurrence of dumping, and that the magnitude of the dumping margins likely to prevail would be weighted-average dumping margins up to 198.08 percent." [Read more...](#)

Ethan Allen Won't Pay Duties on Chests

The U.S. Department of Commerce will stop collecting antidumping duties on four chests being imported by Ethan Allen Operations from China. DOC's decision follows a successful court challenge by Ethan Allen that the products did not fall under the scope of the 2005 wooden bedroom furniture antidumping order geared to protect domestic manufacturers. [Read more...](#)

maple from the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, was supported by forest DNA forensic techniques developed at the University of Adelaide in Australia. According to Tech Times, the team developed DNA markers for the big leaf maple which helped lead to the guilty verdicts of the four men for violating the Lacey Act. [Read more...](#)

Century Furniture Wins OSHA Safety Award

Century Furniture's Plant 3 in Hickory, NC, has been recognized by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for its injury and illness prevention programs. According to Furniture Today, Century is the only furniture manufacturer among nearly 200 North Carolina companies achieving the SHARP (Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program) designation. [Read more...](#)

EPA Names Pella Energy Star Partner of the Year

Window and door maker Pella Corp. of Pella, IA, was one of eight businesses to receive 2016 Energy Star Partner of the Year for Outstanding Achievements in Energy Efficiency from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. EPA lauded Pella for developing Energy Star certified products, including new automated shade technology. Pella also received the Energy Star Challenge for Industry for three manufacturing facilities that improved building energy efficiency in excess of 10 percent. [Read more...](#)



1,500 Wood Chairs Recalled Due to Laceration Hazard

Room & Board of Minneapolis, MN, has recalled about 1,500 Doyle wood chairs after receiving 10 complaints of chair backrests breaking. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the chairs, manufactured in the United States, sold for between \$300 and \$520. [Read more...](#)

Cited & Fined

Wood Fibers Inc., a manufacturer of wood pellets based in Niagara, WI, was cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for the sixth time since 2011, for safety compliance violations for putting its employees at risk of suffering amputation, burns and other life-threatening injuries. The company, which has been placed on OSHA's Severe Violator Enforcement Program, was cited for four repeat and three serious safety and health violations and fined \$152,460. [Read more...](#)

BCS Manufacturing LLC, a cabinet manufacturer based in St. Louis, MO, faces \$53,200 in fines, including for allowing combustible dust to accumulate, failing to develop a respiratory protection program, inadequate machine guarding and other serious safety violations. [Read more...](#)

Kenneth Snider Inc., a sawmill in Princeton, WV, was cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for one willful and 24 serious violations. OSHA's investigation, conducted under the agency's national emphasis program for amputations, found employees working within inches of an unguarded saw. Other violations included no collection system for the removal of combustible dust, no personal protective equipment for chainsaw operators and electrical hazards. Proposed fines total \$59,000. [Read more...](#)

Vista Windows of Warren, OH, was fined \$44,500 for violations stemming from injuries suffered by an employee whose right hand was caught in the rollers of a glass press he was cleaning. The worker sustained fractures, nerve and tendon damage. Vista was cited for lack of machine guarding, not using locking devices to safeguard workers during maintenance operations and other safety violations. [Read more...](#)

Winter Woods, a wood décor and floral supplier based in Glidden, WI, was cited for 10 serious safety violations by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for exposing employees to harmful chemicals in paints and adhesives without providing sufficient ventilation. Proposed fines total \$70,000. [Read more...](#)

Conifex of Fort Saint James, BC, was fined \$75,000 for hazardous accumulations of combustible dust by WorkSafeBC. According to the Prince George Citizen, WorkSafeBC inspectors found excessive amounts of wood dust around the main conveyor belt, under the sorters, and behind the sawmill chipper. [Read more...](#)



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