



- Assistant Secretary of Labor Reports on Occupational Injuries in 2015
 - OSHA Issues Final Rule Updating Walking-Working Surfaces & Personal Fall Protection Requirements
 - EPA Issues Rule Finalizing Changes to Existing Hazardous Waste Export & Import Regulations
 - Inside Walmart's 2025 Sustainability Goals
 - EPA Sends Model Carbon-Trading Rules to White House
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Assistant Secretary of Labor Reports on Occupational Injuries in 2015

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Oct. 27, 2016) - Occupational injury and illness data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed a significant drop in the rate of recordable workplace injuries and illnesses in 2015, continuing a pattern of decline that, apart from 2012, has occurred annually for the last 13 years.

Private industry employers reported about 2.9 million nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses in 2015, representing a decline of about 48,000 from 2014, despite an increase in total hours worked. The rate of cases recorded was 3.0 cases per 100 full-time workers - down from 3.2 in 2014. The rate is the lowest recorded since at least 2002, when OSHA recordkeeping requirements were modified.

Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health issued the following statement:

"We are encouraged to see the significant decline in worker injury and illness rates. This is the result of the relentless efforts of employers, unions, worker advocates, occupational safety and health professionals, and federal and state government agencies ensuring that worker safety and health remains a top priority every day."

More Information:

<https://www.osha.gov/>

OSHA Issues Final Rule Updating Walking-Working Surfaces & Personal Fall Protection Requirements

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Nov. 4, 2016) - The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration today issued a final rule updating its general industry Walking-Working Surfaces standards specific to slip, trip, and fall hazards. The rule also includes a new section under the general industry Personal Protective Equipment standards that establishes employer requirements for using personal fall protection systems.

"The final rule will increase workplace protection from those hazards, especially fall hazards, which are a leading cause of worker deaths and injuries," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. "OSHA believes advances in technology and greater flexibility will reduce worker deaths and injuries from falls." The final rule also increases consistency between general and construction industries, which will help employers and workers that work in both industries.

OSHA estimates the final standard will prevent 29 fatalities and more than 5,842 injuries annually. The rule becomes effective on Jan. 17, 2017, and will affect approximately 112 million workers at seven million worksites.

The final rule's most significant update is allowing employers to select the fall protection system that works best for them, choosing from a range of accepted options including personal fall protection systems. OSHA has permitted the use of personal fall protection systems in construction since 1994 and the final rule adopts similar requirements for general industry. Other changes include allowing employers to use rope descent systems up to 300 feet above a lower level; prohibiting the use of body belts as part of a personal fall arrest system; and requiring worker training on personal fall protection systems and fall equipment.

More Information:

<https://www.osha.gov/>

EPA Issues Rule Finalizing Changes to Existing Hazardous Waste Export & Import Regulations

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Oct. 28, 2016) - The U.S. EPA finalized a rule to improve the nation's hazardous waste regulations to protect public health and the environment. The updated Hazardous Waste Import and Export Regulations streamline the hazardous waste export and import process, implement mandatory electronic reporting for international shipments and electronically linking export information.

The final rule improves and consolidates previous regulations so that one set of requirements – the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD's) more stringent controlling transboundary movements of hazardous waste requirements – applies to all U.S. hazardous waste exports and imports.

More efficient compliance monitoring will be provided by the rule's requirement to link the consent to export with the electronic export information submitted to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). These regulations support a broader U.S. government effort led by CBP to convert from a paper-based border-crossing approval process for a wide range of exports and imports, to an electronic border-crossing approval process. This rule covers the hazardous waste export component of this larger International Trade Data System initiative.

Additionally, the new rule requires mandatory electronic reporting to EPA, which will enable increased sharing of hazardous waste export and import data with state programs, the general public and individual hazardous waste exporters and importers.

More Information:

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/>

Two Steps Forward - Inside Walmart's 2025 Sustainability Goals

PHILADELPHIA, PA (Nov. 4, 2016) - Walmart is taking the next step in its 11-year sustainability journey, as CEO Doug McMillon announces a series of 2025 goals. For the first time, the company is putting some hard targets and timetables on what had previously been largely aspirational goals. It's a big step forward.

Indeed, the company is promising nothing less than "a new era of trust and transparency," as laid out by McMillon at the Net Impact conference in Philadelphia.

In 2005, then-CEO Lee Scott set three aspirational sustainability goals for Walmart: to create zero waste, operate with 100 percent renewable energy and sell products "that sustain resources and the

environment." Since then, the company has been working to live up those ambitious aspirations, boasting a number of successes along the way.

Now, more than a decade later, the company decided it was time to up its game. Specifically, the world's largest retailer is committing to, by 2025:

- Achieve zero waste to landfill in Canada, Japan, U.K. and the U.S.,
- Be powered by 50 percent renewable energy sources under a plan designed to achieve science-based targets,
- Double sales of locally grown produce,
- Expand sustainable sourcing to cover 20 key commodities, including bananas, grapes, coffee and tea, and
- Use 100 percent recyclable packaging for all private-label brands.

More Information:

<https://www.greenbiz.com/article/>

EPA Sends Model Carbon-Trading Rules to White House

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Nov. 4, 2016) - The Obama Administration submitted a recently finalized portion of the Clean Power Plan to the Office of Management and Budget for interagency review.

The move will likely spur complaints from opponents of the climate regulation that EPA is violating a Supreme Court order from February 2016 halting implementation of the rule.

EPA cannot require states to plan for the rule, which would not begin until at least 2022. But the Agency argues it can continue work, including finishing model carbon-trading rules that would serve as a federal plan for states that don't write their own.

"Many states have asked EPA to move forward with our outreach and to continue providing support and developing tools related to the Clean Power Plan, including the model trading rules and Clean Energy Incentive Program," said EPA spokeswoman Melissa Harrison in an emailed statement. "We are developing these tools in a way that is consistent with the Supreme Court's stay of the Clean Power Plan."

Almost all states and electric utilities would like to use carbon trading under the rule. In a carbon-trading system, a company that falls short of its standards could purchase allowance from companies that cut more carbon than they need to in order to comply. Carbon trading is likely the simplest and least expensive way to meet the rule's goals, according to modeling.

More Information:

<https://www.epa.gov/cleanpowerplan/>