

Building Safe & Healthy Workplaces that Promote Worker Voice

Establishing collaborative safety and health programs in workplaces is one of the most effective ways to protect workers and businesses. Losing workers to injury or illness, even for a short time, can cause significant disruption and cost to workers and their families. It can also affect businesses by lowering workplace morale and productivity, increasing turnover and training needs, and negatively impacting an employer's reputation.

When management and workers collaborate to identify and solve issues before they occur, it builds trust, enhances communication, and leads to mutually beneficial improvements. There are many ways to lawfully and productively build safer and healthier workplaces.

If workers are represented by a union, consider the collective bargaining process and structures set up through that process to address health and safety. For example, unions can add tremendous value to health and safety programs at all stages—including setting goals, identifying and reporting hazards, investigating incidents, innovating safer work methods, and tracking progress.

In workplaces without unions, employers can still have robust employee participation in health and safety programs, if that participation does not cross the line into unlawful domination or interference under the National Labor Relations Act.



[osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov)



1-800-321-OSHA (6742)



[nlrb.gov](https://www.nlr.gov)



1-844-762-NLRB (6572)

In all workplaces, workers have rights related to safety and health:

- Workers must be able to report safety and health concerns, at any time, and be protected from retaliation. Retaliation against workers for reporting safety and health concerns may violate both the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the National Labor Relations Act. OSHA and the NLRB take retaliation very seriously and they will vigorously pursue whistleblower enforcement action if it is determined that unlawful retaliation occurred.
- Workers also have a right to refuse to perform dangerous work under certain circumstances under the Occupational Safety and Health Act and to protest and strike about unsafe working conditions under certain circumstances under the National Labor Relations Act. It is unlawful to retaliate against workers for exercising these protected rights.
- Rules, policies, or practices should not interfere with workers' ability to report safety and health concerns or engage in other protected activity under the Occupational Safety and Health Act and National Labor Relations Act. For example, if reporting an incident or concern could jeopardize the award of incentive-based prizes, rewards, or bonuses, or if reporting an incident could result in an adverse action based on productivity, such interference could violate both the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the National Labor Relations Act.

Find information on how to report safety and health violations of the Occupational Safety and Health Act on OSHA's [File a Complaint webpage](#). Workers also have rights related to safety and health ([osha.gov/workers](https://www.osha.gov/workers) and [worker.gov/safety-rights](https://www.worker.gov/safety-rights)).

OSHA enforces more than 20 other whistleblower laws that prohibit retaliation for reporting violations. Workers can exercise their rights to file a Whistleblower complaint within 30 days if they believe they have been retaliated against in any way.

Learn how to report violations of the National Labor Relations Act to the NLRB by filing an unfair labor practice charge and information on how to file a charge.



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