

OSHA PENALTIES AUTOMATICALLY INCREASE, PUTTING PRESSURE ON EMPLOYERS TO COMPLY WITH WORKPLACE SAFETY OBLIGATIONS

Insights
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Employers should be aware of higher penalties for workplace safety violations that the U.S. Department of Labor has just published. These are the yearly increases to the maximum civil penalties that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) may assess through citations against employers as a result of workplace safety and health inspections. The penalties will apply to all citations issued by OSHA beginning January 16, including for employers who currently have an open inspection with the agency. Here are the key changes you need to know about.

Summary of Penalties

The following is a [summary of the maximum and minimum penalties](#) that may be assessed by OSHA as of January 16:

Serious Violations

- Penalty minimum: \$1,190 per violation
- Penalty maximum: \$16,131 per violation

Other-Than-Serious Violations

- Penalty minimum: \$0
- Penalty maximum: \$16,131 per violation

Willful or Repeated Violations

- Penalty minimum: \$11,524 per violation (except that for a repeated other-than-serious violation that otherwise would have no

Related People



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penalty, a Gravity Based Penalty of \$460 shall be proposed for the first repeated violation, \$1,152 for the second repeated violation, and \$2,304 for a third repetition)

- Penalty maximum: \$161,323 per violation

Violation of Posting Requirements

- Penalty minimum: \$0
- Penalty maximum: \$16,131 per violation

Failure-to-Abate Violations

- Penalty minimum: N/A
- Penalty maximum: \$16,131 per day unabated beyond the abatement date (generally limited to 30 days maximum)

Again, these penalties will apply to all citations issued by OSHA beginning January 16, including for employers who currently have an open inspection with OSHA.

You can count on OSHA to continue increasing civil penalties in January each year. In 2015, Congress passed the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act to adjust monetary penalties assessed by OSHA and other agencies. The aim of this law was to adjust these penalties for inflation and to continue to deter violations of federal laws intended to protect workers.

If you do business in a state where a state agency rather than Federal OSHA enforces the Occupational Safety and Health Act (such as Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, California, or any of the 22 State Plans covering both private sector and state and local government workers, or the seven state plans covering only state and local government workers), civil penalty amounts may differ. In North Carolina, for example, employers may be surprised to learn that the maximum penalties more than doubled in 2022 — and these penalties will now increase every January to match the maximum penalties available to Federal OSHA discussed above.

Conclusion

You should understand the full impact of accepting OSHA citations without contesting them. Before paying any fine assessed by OSHA or a state agency, contact the author of

this Insight, any member of the [Workplace Safety Practice Group](#), or your Fisher Phillips attorney for guidance. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information on OSHA issues.