

## OSHA National Emphasis Program focuses on protecting workers against COVID-19, impacts EMS agencies

EMS agencies should be aware of the launch of OSHA's [National Emphasis Program](#) (NEP), which modifies its [Updated Interim Enforcement Response Plan for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). The new NEP will target industries where OSHA data shows the highest amount of workers expected to perform tasks associated with exposure to SARS-CoV-2. In [appendices A and B of the NEP](#), primary and secondary target industries that meet this criteria are listed. Not surprisingly, "ambulance services" are a primary target industry.

What this means for EMS agencies is OSHA will be focusing on whether your safety and risk programs, particularly your Respiratory Protection Programs, are compliant with [OSHA's Respiratory Protection Regulations](#) (CFR 1910.134). While for many EMS agencies, your Respiratory Protection Program is part of the bloodborne and airborne protection policies that are well established, you may still want to review existing programs against OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard to ensure current practices are compliant.

OSHA NEP inspections will enhance OSHA's previous coronavirus enforcement efforts, and will include some follow-up inspections of worksites inspected in 2020. The program's focused strategy ensures abatement and includes monitoring the effectiveness of OSHA's enforcement and guidance efforts. The program will remain in effect for up to one year from its issuance date, though OSHA has the flexibility to amend or cancel the program as the pandemic subsides.

For agencies who need additional guidance on compliance with OSHA's Respiratory Protection Regulations, OSHA provides a [Small Entity Compliance Guide for the Respiratory Protection Standard](#). This guide is intended to assist program administrators, employers who need to develop a program, employees who may be required to wear respirators and licensed medical professionals who must evaluate an employee's ability to wear respirators, among others. This 124-page guide is divided into the same sections that appear in OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard. Citations to the standard provided in each section enable you to compare the text in the guide with the OSHA standard. It also contains sample templates and checklists that can be utilized by employers to assist with compliance.

For more additional information and guidance, see OSHA's [COVID-19 webpage](#). OSHA also provides [answers to some frequently asked questions for employers](#) in various industries about how to protect workers from COVID-19 and remain in compliance.

(Source: [American Ambulance Association](#), [OSHA](#))