

GAO
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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-45](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has made great progress in improving working conditions since the construction of the Empire State Building. (See graphic.) Yet, since the early 1990s, over 50,000 workers have died from work-related accidents and millions experience work-related injuries or illnesses each year. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is the primary federal agency responsible for protecting workplace safety and health. GAO was asked to assess how well OSHA was able to target its enforcement resources on hazardous worksites, measure its accomplishments, and ensure inspection staff quality.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends ways that OSHA can get the most out of its targeting programs, enhance its ability to measure its impact, and help ensure long-term success of its efforts to enhance inspector quality.

While OSHA expressed concerns about some of the material in the report, it generally agreed to act on our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-45.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robert E. Robertson at (202) 512-7215 or robertsonr@gao.gov.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH

OSHA Can Strengthen Enforcement Through Improved Program Management

What GAO Found

OSHA has taken important steps toward targeting its enforcement resources on hazardous worksites, measure its accomplishments, and enhance the professionalism of its staff. However, these systems could be strengthened by better information and mechanisms that would make targeting efforts more efficient, measurement more precise, and training efforts more effective.

OSHA's targeting processes have not fully ensured that it identifies hazardous worksites for priority inspection because its worksite-targeting programs lack the necessary data to effectively identify high-hazard worksites or those with hazards under OSHA's jurisdiction. Also, OSHA's measurement efforts did not accurately demonstrate its impact on workplace safety and health because, for example, it used national data on injuries and illnesses to measure its progress in achieving strategic goals even though only 31 states are covered by these goals. Finally, OSHA's efforts to enhance the quality of its inspection workforce have the potential to improve enforcement, but the anticipated outcomes could be jeopardized by a lack of necessary mechanisms, such as a training directive that reflects current plans, or a comprehensive database that tracks training or skills obtained by inspection staff.

Hine, Lewis W., *Photographs of the Empire State Building under Construction, 1931*. 91PH056.063: A worker hanging onto two steel beams



Source: Photography Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.