

Recordkeeping 101: Part 8

A guide for keeping an accurate OSHA log

By Brian Zaidman, Research Analyst, Research and Statistics

Editor's note: This is the eighth installment of a series about using the OSHA Form 300 and summarizing its results. This information is directed to people who are new to OSHA recordkeeping activities, who are unfamiliar with the 2002 recordkeeping changes or who want to review their recordkeeping practices. Visit www.doli.state.mn.us/recordkeeping.html for previous installments.

The OSHA recordkeeping system puts a ready-to-use performance measurement tool for workplace safety into the hands of every business. Thanks to the OSHA log (OSHA Form 300), every business has a system for accurately recording and measuring an important aspect of workplace safety: the number of injuries and illnesses among its workers. The OSHA log as serves as the official record of work-related injuries and illnesses for a work establishment. All employees, former employees, their personal representatives and their collective bargaining agents can review the log. In Minnesota, all employers with more than 10 employees must comply with the recordkeeping requirements, regardless of their industry.



During the past seven quarterly editions of *Safety Lines*, the Recordkeeping 101 series has presented a wide range of issues involved in creating and using your OSHA log:

- part one – deciding what injury and illness cases to include in the log;
- part two – classifying cases into case types;
- part three – counting the days away from work and days of job transfer or restriction;
- part four – describing injury and illness events;
- part five – classifying cases as either injuries or illnesses;
- part six – creating the annual log summary; and
- part seven – using the log summary to track your company's performance.

In this installment, the conclusion of the series, we review some key points for creating and maintaining an accurate OSHA log. Improving your ability to measure workplace safety improves your ability to manage workplace safety.

Educate yourself

The best way to improve your recordkeeping skills is to spend a few minutes becoming familiar with the recordkeeping system when you're not under pressure to record a case or prepare an annual summary.

- Congratulations, you're reading a *Recordkeeping 101* installment! Bookmark all the online installments or print them and keep them with your log. Minnesota OSHA has all the recordkeeping installments available online at www.doli.state.mn.us/recordkeeping.html.
- Become familiar with the OSHA recordkeeping forms packet, available on the federal OSHA Web site at www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/new-osha300form1-1-04.pdf.
- The federal OSHA recordkeeping Web site also provides all the information that was presented in the *Recordkeeping 101* articles at www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/index.html.
- Recordkeeping training courses are offered through the Minnesota Safety Council. For a schedule of classes, visit www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/courses/courses.cfm#o.
- You can view a recordkeeping PowerPoint presentation from Minnesota OSHA online at www.doli.state.mn.us/ppt/recordkeeping1904.ppt.

- If you have questions, contact Minnesota OSHA by e-mail at osha.compliance@state.mn.us or by phone at (651) 284-5042 (toll-free at 1-800-342-5354).

Educate others in your workplace

Recordkeeping knowledge is an important skill. After learning how to maintain the log and create the annual summary, teach others how to do it. When workers who have learned the OSHA log system change jobs, their replacements often have to start from scratch. The following ideas can help a replacement hit the ground running.

- Keep copies of important recordkeeping-related documents.
- Train a coworker, safety committee members or your supervisor about the basics of recordkeeping. It helps to have someone appreciate the work that is involved. This also gives you someone to work with when questions arise.
- Take notes about what you do and how you do it.

Organize your records

- Use an electronic version of the log; federal OSHA provides an Excel version on its Web site at www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/new-osha300form1-1-04.xls. This will help keep your information organized and legible, and provides more room for text.
- Good records organization will help you when you train others. It also shows your business is serious about occupational safety and health.
- A well-kept, legible log makes it easy to prepare the annual summary.
- The log must be kept available for five years after the year of the cases, so there's a high likelihood that other people will be looking at the log.

Include only recordable cases

- The basic recordkeeping requirement is to record all work-related injuries and illnesses that result in death, loss of consciousness, medical treatment beyond first aid, days away from work, restriction of work or transfer to another job.
- The log should include only those cases meeting the recordability criteria. Many workplace incidents may look like recordable injuries, but don't meet the criteria. For example, a work-related rash that can be treated with a nonprescription ointment and that does not result in any job restrictions or time away from work is not a recordable case.
- Medical treatment is any treatment not included on OSHA's first aid list (see Recordkeeping 101: Part 1).
- Record a case only in the year in which the injury or illness first occurred. If a December injury results in days away from work the following January, the case is recorded in December, not January.

Each case receives only one case type

- Each recordable case must be classified according to the most serious outcome for that case. Only one classification is permitted.
- The order of case seriousness is: death, days away from work, job transfer or restriction, and other recordable cases. A nonfatal case with only one day away from work must be classified as a days away from work case, even if the injury also results in 150 days of job restriction.

Count calendar days

- For cases with days away from work and days of job transfer or restriction, count calendar days, not just scheduled workdays or days the business is open.

- Begin counting days on the day after the injury occurred or the illness began.
- Continue counting days even into the next year. However, record your count on the log for the year the injury or illness first occurred.
- If a case with days away from work also has days of job transfer or restriction, count each type separately and enter each duration in the appropriate column on the log.

Provide a thorough description of each case

- Descriptions should provide specific information that safety directors and safety committee members can use to improve workplace safety.
- Describe the worker's activity, what happened, the part of the body that was affected and how it was affected.
- If necessary, use more than one row of the paper version of the log when recording a description.

Classify each case as an injury or an illness

- Each recordable case must have a check in only one of the columns, M1 through M6. Check the category that best fits the circumstances of the case.
- Most recordable cases are injuries. In general, injuries result from instantaneous events or exposures in the work environment.

Use the log

The OSHA log is a tool to help employers manage workplace safety and health. Keeping an accurate log is only the start of the process.

- Every establishment required to keep a log must create an annual summary and post the summary in the workplace.
- Share the summary information with your company's management and the safety committee.
- Compare annual results and benchmark against the state and national averages for your industry. Minnesota rate information is available at www.doli.state.mn.us/blsstats.htm. National statistics are available at www.bls.gov/iif.
- Use statistics about detailed case characteristics to understand the most common types of injuries for your industry and for the occupations in your establishment.
- For help accessing or understanding the BLS survey results tables, contact the Department of Labor and Industry's Research and Statistics unit by phone at (651) 285-5025 or by e-mail at dli.research@state.mn.us.

Don't let winter hazards trip you up

By Brian Zaidman, Research Analyst, Research and Statistics

Four winter months — December through March — account for 68 percent of all workers' compensation indemnity claims resulting from outdoor slips, trips and falls on the same level or from steps. Data for the past four years shows an average of 615 such injuries each winter, compared to 290 of these injuries during the remaining eight months. These injuries occurred most often on parking lots; this is followed by sidewalks, stairs or steps, streets and the ground (unspecified).

These injuries have a very different profile than indemnity claims in general. Compared to all indemnity claims for 2003 and 2004, fractures are much more common and sprains and strains are less common among the outdoor winter injuries. Outdoor winter slips, trips and falls are more likely to result in injuries to the lower extremities and to multiple body parts, and are much less likely to result in back injuries than are all indemnity claims.

