

EHS CONCEPTS

THE 5,070

What killed U.S. workers in 2024, event by event, and the leader's fix list for each. A free field guide.

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Keep your people whole.

FROM RYAN

Every 104 minutes

The examples in this letter (the phone call, the truck, the trench, the parking lot) are composites to show the pattern, not reports of real events.

Every safety leader dreads one phone call. It comes at 2:40 in the afternoon, and someone you hired is not going home. Then come the questions you cannot answer fast enough: Who was there? What was the plan? Who decided the job could run that way?

In 2024, that call happened 5,070 times in the United States. The Bureau of Labor Statistics says a worker died from a work-related injury every 104 minutes. Transportation incidents killed 1,937 people, 38.2% of the total. Falls, slips, and trips killed 844. Contact with objects and equipment killed 756. Violent acts killed 733. Exposure to harmful substances or environments killed 687.

The count went down 4.0% from 2023, and the fatality rate fell for the second year in a row. Good. But the list barely changes from year to year, because the conditions behind it barely change. Vehicles, heights, moving machines, and lone work are designed, scheduled, staffed, and funded by leaders. Workers make choices inside the conditions we build.

This guide takes the six major fatal event groups in order of size. For each one you get the pain point, what the 2024 data says, the root causes, the rules in plain words with tags, controls in hierarchy order, a printable self-audit, who owns what, and one question to start a toolbox talk.

You do not need all six. Find the one that could kill someone at your site this week. Walk it first.

Ryan L. Rinehart

Founder, EHS Concepts — The Ways of Safety

Keep your people whole.



THE VERIFIED NUMBERS

U.S. work deaths in 2024

5,070

Fatal work injuries in 2024, down 4.0% from 5,283 in 2023

3.3

Fatalities per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers, down from 3.5, the second straight annual decline

104 min

How often a U.S. worker died from a work-related injury in 2024 (99 minutes in 2023)

1,937

Transportation incident deaths, 38.2% of the total, the most frequent fatal event

1,391

Deaths in transportation and material moving occupations, the most of any occupation group (rate 12.5 per 100,000)

1,229

Hispanic or Latino workers killed; 842 of them (68.5%) were foreign-born

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) 2024, news release USDL-26-0230 (Feb. 19, 2026), Table 2 (events, 2023–24) and Table A-9 (events by private industry sector). CFOI counts fatal injuries only; deaths from occupational illness are excluded unless an injury event caused them. Events use the BLS Occupational Injury and Illness Classification System (OIICS) version 3. BLS suppresses small cells, so subcategories do not always add to totals. * Rows marked with an asterisk are EHS Concepts calculations from the published figures.

The six fatal event groups in this guide

	EVENT GROUP	2024 DEATHS AND SHARE OF 5,070*	CHANGE VS. 2023
1	Transportation incidents	1,937 · 38.2% (roadway 1,146; pedestrian struck by vehicle 369)	1,942 → 1,937
2	Falls, slips, and trips	844 · about 17% (fall to lower level 666)	885 → 844
3	Contact incidents	756 · about 15% (struck by object 357; powered equipment 213; collapse or engulfment 80)	779 → 756
4	Violent acts	733 · about 14% (homicides 470; suicides 263)	740 → 733
5	Exposure to harmful substances or environments	687 · about 14% (overdose 410; electricity 130; heat and cold 53)	820 → 687
6	Fires and explosions	93 · about 2%	104 → 93

Counts are BLS. Shares other than 38.2% are EHS Concepts calculations against 5,070 and are rounded. The six groups total 5,050; the remaining deaths fall in other OIICS groups (for example, overexertion and bodily conditions, 12).

BEFORE THE SIX EVENTS

The five basics that sit under all six

<u>OSH Act Sec. 5(a)(1)</u> General Duty Clause · BOTH · final	Keep the workplace free of recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious harm. Several of the biggest killers here (employee driving, workplace violence, heat) have no specific federal OSHA standard; this clause still applies.
<u>29 CFR 1904.39</u> Reporting · BOTH · final	Report a work-related death to OSHA within 8 hours, and an in-patient hospitalization, amputation, or loss of an eye within 24 hours. Know who makes the call before you need to.
<u>29 CFR 1910.38 / 1926.35</u> Emergency action plans · GI / CON · final	When an OSHA standard requires one, have a plan for reporting emergencies, evacuating, accounting for everyone, and rescue and medical duties. Written unless you have 10 or fewer employees.
<u>OSH Act Sec. 11(c)</u> Anti-retaliation · BOTH · final	You may not punish a worker for reporting a hazard or an injury. The warning before a fatality usually came from someone who was not sure it was safe to speak.
<u>OSHA Recommended Practices</u> Safety and health programs · GUIDANCE	OSHA's free framework: management leadership, worker participation, hazard identification, prevention and control, education, program evaluation, and coordination with contractors and staffing agencies.

Tags: GI = general industry (29 CFR 1910). CON = construction (29 CFR 1926). BOTH = applies to both (the OSH Act, 29 CFR 1904). FMCSA = commercial motor vehicle drivers and carriers (49 CFR). STATE = one state's law. GUIDANCE = advisory; it is not a rule and cannot be cited by itself.

Ten-minute foundation check

#	CHECK	YES	NO
1	We have listed the tasks at our site that could kill someone, and each has a named owner.	☐	☐
2	Each of those tasks has a control above PPE on the hierarchy, or a written reason it does not.	☐	☐
3	Workers can report a hazard without fear, and we can show one recent report that got fixed.	☐	☐
4	Everyone knows who calls OSHA within 8 hours after a death or 24 hours after a hospitalization.	☐	☐
5	Our emergency plan covers rescue for the fatal risks we have (falls, confined spaces, overdose, violence).	☐	☐
6	Serious near misses (the ones that could have killed) are investigated like injuries.	☐	☐
7	Contractors and temp workers are covered by the same controls as our own people.	☐	☐
8	Leaders review fatal-risk controls in the field at least monthly, not just in reports.	☐	☐

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Walk it. Score it. Own it.

1. Start with the event that could kill someone at your site this week, not the one at the top of this guide.
2. Print the self-audit page. Walk one area, one task, or one crew. Thirty minutes.
3. Score what you can see or put your hand on, not what the binder says. If the binder and the field disagree, the binder is wrong until the field changes.
4. Every “No” gets one owner and one date before you leave. Anything that could kill someone today gets stopped now.
5. Walk it again in 30 days. A fix that is not verified is a wish.

Spotlight: who is dying, not just how

THE PAIN POINT **A site's safety training is all in English. Half the crew learned their trade in another country, from a different rulebook, and nobody asked what they understood.** (illustrative)

The 2024 data shows who carries the risk. Workers in transportation and material moving occupations had 1,391 deaths, the most of any occupation group, at 12.5 per 100,000 FTE workers, almost four times the national rate of 3.3*. Construction and extraction workers had 1,032. Hispanic or Latino workers had 1,229 deaths at 4.3 per 100,000; 68.5% of them were foreign-born. Women were 8.1% of all deaths but 15.3% of workplace homicide victims. (Source: BLS CFI 2024.)

Build controls for the crew you actually have: training in the languages they speak, checks for understanding that are not a signature, and supervisors who ask new and foreign-born workers what they were taught to do differently.

- ☐ Safety training and key signs are in the languages our workers speak best.
- ☐ Understanding is checked by watching the work or asking the worker to explain, not by a signature.

USE THIS EVERY TIME

When you find a gap: the eight-step response

1. Stop or contain.	If the gap could kill someone today (an open edge, a machine without lockout, a trench without protection, a driver on the phone, a worker alone with an angry customer), stop that task now. Anyone can call it. Stop is a right on this site. Restart is a decision. A named person makes it after the control is in place.
2. Fix the condition first.	Guard it, lock it out, barricade it, add the second person, change the route. Then fix the paperwork so it says what is true.
3. Find the decision that allowed it.	Ask what made the condition normal: a delivery window, a staffing level, a budget deferral, a contractor arrangement. Do not stop at "they should have known."
4. One owner. One date.	One name, not a department. One date, not "ASAP."
5. Verify in the field.	The owner shows the fix at the job. Re-check in 30 days.
6. Look sideways.	If it is on one site, one crew, or one shift, check the others this week.
7. Protect the person who raised it.	Thank them and tell them what changed. Retaliation for reporting an injury or hazard is illegal under Section 11(c) of the OSH Act.
8. Get help when you need it.	OSHA's On-Site Consultation Program is free, confidential, and separate from enforcement for small and mid-size employers (osha.gov/consultation). Your insurer's loss-control staff are also a free resource.

Leaders own the conditions. Workers make choices inside the conditions we build. When a gap shows up, the first question is not "who did it?" It is "what did we build, fund, schedule, or tolerate that made this normal?"

This guide is a practical summary for planning and self-audit. It is not legal or medical advice and does not replace the text of OSHA, FMCSA, or state rules. State-plan states may have different or additional rules. Regulatory text is paraphrased. When this guide and a regulation disagree, the regulation controls. Fatality figures are national counts and will not match any one company's experience.

01

Transportation incidents

5(a)(1) [BOTH]

49 CFR 392.80, 392.82, 395.3, 396.11 [FMCSA] · 1910.178(m), (n) [GI] · 1926.601, 1926.201 [CON] · OSH Act

1,937

transportation deaths in 2024, 38.2%
of all work deaths

1,146

roadway crashes involving motor
vehicles, down 8.5%

369

pedestrians struck by vehicles, up
19.0%

THE PAIN POINT The delivery window is 7:00 to 7:30. The driver left late because the truck failed its pre-trip and was “fixed” with zip ties. He is answering dispatch texts at 65 miles an hour. (illustrative)

What the data says

Source: BLS CFI 2024, released Feb. 19, 2026. Transportation incidents killed 1,937 workers in 2024, 38.2% of all work deaths and the most frequent fatal event every year. Roadway incidents involving motor vehicles fell 8.5% to 1,146: 601 were collisions with other vehicles, 331 collisions with objects (292 with something on the side of the road), and 208 non-collision events including 154 overturns. Pedestrians struck by vehicles rose 19.0% to 369: 61 in road work zones, 148 in roadways, and 158 in non-roadway areas such as yards, docks, and lots, where 50 were struck by a vehicle backing up. Another 210 died in non-roadway vehicle incidents, 109 in aircraft incidents, and 52 in water vehicle incidents. The trade, transportation, and utilities sector alone had 756 transportation deaths (Table A-9).

Why it really happens

Not worker carelessness. These are the system and leadership conditions that make this predictable.

- Delivery windows, routes, and dispatch habits assume drivers can speed, skip breaks, or use the phone.
- Vehicle defects are found but not fixed before the next trip.
- Pedestrians and vehicles share yards, docks, and lots with no traffic plan.
- Non-CDL and personal-vehicle driving for work has no policy at all.
- Fatigue is invisible until it is a crash: long shifts, then a long drive home in a company vehicle.

REQUIREMENTS AND CONTROLS · TRANSPORTATION INCIDENTS

What the rules require, in plain words

49 CFR 392.80, 392.82 · FMCSA · final	CMV drivers may not text or use a hand-held phone while driving, and carriers may not allow or require it.
49 CFR 395.3 · FMCSA · final	Property-carrying CMV drivers: no more than 11 hours driving after 10 consecutive hours off duty, no driving after the 14th hour on duty, and a 30-minute break after 8 hours of driving (short-haul exceptions apply).
49 CFR 396.11, 396.13 · FMCSA · final	Drivers inspect before driving and report defects in writing; the carrier repairs listed defects that affect safe operation before the vehicle is driven again.
1910.178(m), (n) · GI · final	Forklift operators slow down and sound the horn at cross aisles and blind spots, look in the direction of travel, and no one stands or passes under raised forks.
1926.601(b)(4) · CON · final · 1926.201(a) · CON · final	Vehicles with an obstructed rear view need a backup alarm or a spotter. Work zone flaggers follow Part 6 of the MUTCD.
OSH Act 5(a)(1) · BOTH · final	This guide found no federal OSHA standard written specifically for employees driving on public roads. Recognized driving hazards fall under the General Duty Clause; OSHA points employers to the OSHA/NHTSA/NETS guidelines (GUIDANCE).

Paraphrased. Federal regulatory text checked on eCFR (current to Oct. 8, 2026) on Oct. 13, 2026. State-plan states may have different or additional rules. Tags: GI = general industry (29 CFR 1910). CON = construction (29 CFR 1926). BOTH = applies to both (the OSH Act, 29 CFR 1904). FMCSA = commercial motor vehicle drivers and carriers (49 CFR). STATE = one state's law. GUIDANCE = advisory; it is not a rule and cannot be cited by itself.

Controls that work, in hierarchy order

Eliminate	Cut trips: better routing, video or phone visits, fewer same-day emergency runs. Separate pedestrian and vehicle routes in yards and docks.
Engineer	Phone-blocking driving mode, telematics for speed and fatigue, collision-avoidance features, backup cameras and alarms, physical barriers at pedestrian crossings.
Administrative	Written driving policy (phones, belts, speed, fatigue) for every worker who drives for work. Dispatch never contacts moving drivers. Defects fixed before the next trip. Traffic plan for every yard and dock.
Leadership	Delivery windows and routes that allow legal speeds and breaks. Managers model the phone rule.
Small-fleet fix	Change one rule today: the next job is sent before the driver leaves the last one, or the driver calls back when parked. Put it in writing.

Leaders own the conditions. If the control only works when someone is willing to argue with the schedule, it is not a control. Fatal events are where that argument is lost for good. Build it so the safe way is the normal way.

30-MINUTE SELF-AUDIT · PRINT AND TAKE TO THE FLOOR

01 · Transportation incidents

SITE	AREA / JOB / CREW	AUDITOR	DATE
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#	CHECK WHAT YOU CAN SEE OR PUT YOUR HAND ON	YES	NO	N/A	NOTES
1	There is a written driving policy that covers phones, seat belts, speed, and fatigue.	☐	☐	☐	
2	Dispatch and managers do not call or text moving drivers.	☐	☐	☐	
3	Pre-trip inspections are done, and defects are repaired before the vehicle goes out again.	☐	☐	☐	
4	Schedules and delivery windows allow legal speeds, hours, and breaks.	☐	☐	☐	
5	Driver records are checked at hire and at least yearly.	☐	☐	☐	
6	Yards and docks have marked pedestrian routes separated from vehicles.	☐	☐	☐	
7	Backing in yards and docks uses alarms, cameras, or a spotter.	☐	☐	☐	
8	Forklift traffic slows and sounds the horn at cross aisles and blind corners.	☐	☐	☐	
9	Personal vehicles used for work are covered by the policy.	☐	☐	☐	
10	Seat belt use is checked by spot checks or telematics.	☐	☐	☐	

#	GAP FOUND	OWNER (ONE NAME)	DUE	VERIFIED

Rule: any “No” that is a live exposure gets stopped or contained before you leave the area. Stop is a right on this site. Restart is a decision. A named person makes it after the control is in place.

PREVENTION PLAYBOOK · TRANSPORTATION INCIDENTS

Who owns it

Owner / GM	Sets the no-phone rule for managers first and funds telematics and barriers.
Dispatch / operations	Plans routes and windows that do not require speeding, skipped breaks, or phone use.
Fleet lead	Owens inspections, repairs, and driver record checks.
Drivers and operators	Pull over to use the phone, report defects, and have the right to stop a trip.
Safety lead	Reviews crashes and near misses with dispatch monthly; audits yard traffic.

How to verify it is working in the field

- Pull one week of dispatch messages. Count those sent to drivers who were moving.
- Stand in the yard or at the dock for 15 minutes. Count pedestrian-vehicle conflicts.
- Check the last five defect reports. Were the defects fixed before the next trip?

TOOLBOX TALK STARTER

When did a schedule last push you to drive faster or longer than felt safe, and who set that schedule?

Ask it at the job, not in the break room. Then listen. Write down what you hear and give it an owner before you leave.

IF YOU FIND A GAP

If a vehicle has a safety defect, park it now. If dispatch is contacting moving drivers, stop it today and put the rule in writing. Name the owner and date for the route or window fix. Then run the eight-step gap response at the front of this guide.

02 Falls, slips, and trips

1910.22, 1910.23, 1910.28 [GI] · 1926.501, 1926.502, 1926.1053 [CON]

844

deaths from falls, slips, and trips in 2024

666

falls to a lower level

10.8%

of fatal falls, slips, and trips were from more than 30 feet

THE PAIN POINT Maintenance changes a high bay light from the top of a stepladder because the lift is in the other building. It is a five-minute job. The fall is twelve feet onto concrete. (illustrative)

What the data says

Source: BLS CFOI 2024, released Feb. 19, 2026. Falls, slips, and trips killed 844 workers in 2024, down 4.6% from 885. 666 were falls to a lower level; 150 were slips, trips, or falls on the same level. In the largest subgroup of lower-level falls, 292 were from 6 to 30 feet and 72 from more than 30 feet; BLS reports that 10.8% of all fatal falls, slips, and trips were from more than 30 feet. Construction had 389 of the 844 (Table A-9), and construction and extraction occupations had 370. Same-level falls are not harmless: 150 people died from them.

Why it really happens

Not worker carelessness. These are the system and leadership conditions that make this predictable.

- Short jobs at height are treated as too quick to set up protection.
- The right access equipment is not where the work is.
- Edges, holes, and skylights are left open because closing them slows the job.
- Ladders are damaged or the wrong type, and nobody inspects them.
- Fall protection is not planned or bid, so it gets improvised.

REQUIREMENTS AND CONTROLS · FALLS, SLIPS, AND TRIPS

What the rules require, in plain words

1910.28(b)(1) · GI · final	Protect workers on unprotected sides and edges 4 feet or more above a lower level with guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall protection.
1926.501(b)(1) · CON · final	In construction, protect workers on unprotected sides and edges 6 feet or more above a lower level.
1910.23(b) · GI · final · 1926.1053 · CON · final	Inspect ladders before use, remove defective ones, and use the right ladder for the job (side rails 3 feet above the landing in construction).
1910.22(a), (d) · GI · final	Keep walking surfaces clean, dry where feasible, and free of hazards; inspect them and fix or guard hazards before use.
1926.502(d)(16) · CON · final	Personal fall arrest systems are rigged so a worker cannot free fall more than 6 feet or contact a lower level.

Paraphrased. Federal regulatory text checked on eCFR (current to Oct. 8, 2026) on Oct. 13, 2026. State-plan states may have different or additional rules. Tags: GI = general industry (29 CFR 1910). CON = construction (29 CFR 1926). BOTH = applies to both (the OSH Act, 29 CFR 1904). FMCSA = commercial motor vehicle drivers and carriers (49 CFR). STATE = one state's law. GUIDANCE = advisory; it is not a rule and cannot be cited by itself.

Controls that work, in hierarchy order

Eliminate	Do the work from the ground: lowering devices for lights and fans, prefabrication at grade, relocating valves and gauges.
Engineer	Permanent guardrails, self-closing gates, covers fastened and marked, skylight screens, anchors installed during construction.
Equipment	Aerial lifts and platform ladders in place of stepladders and extension ladders for repeated work.
Administrative	No work above 4 feet (6 in construction) without a plan. Ladder inspection with a named owner. Rescue plan for anyone caught in a harness.
Small-shop fix	Buy one platform ladder per building and retire the worst stepladder today. Put a self-closing gate on the mezzanine.

Leaders own the conditions. If the control only works when someone is willing to argue with the schedule, it is not a control. Fatal events are where that argument is lost for good. Build it so the safe way is the normal way.

30-MINUTE SELF-AUDIT · PRINT AND TAKE TO THE FLOOR

02 · Falls, slips, and trips

SITE	AREA / JOB / CREW	AUDITOR	DATE
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#	CHECK WHAT YOU CAN SEE OR PUT YOUR HAND ON	YES	NO	N/A	NOTES
1	Every edge 4 feet or more above a lower level has protection (6 feet in construction).	☐	☐	☐	
2	Floor holes and skylights are covered or guarded, and covers are marked and secured.	☐	☐	☐	
3	Mezzanine and dock gates are closed or self-closing.	☐	☐	☐	
4	Ladders are inspected and damaged ones are tagged out.	☐	☐	☐	
5	A lift or platform ladder is available where high work is routine.	☐	☐	☐	
6	Workers using fall arrest are tied to a rated anchor and gear was inspected.	☐	☐	☐	
7	There is a written rescue plan for a worker caught in a harness.	☐	☐	☐	
8	Walking surfaces are dry and free of trip hazards.	☐	☐	☐	
9	Workers exposed to falls have training records.	☐	☐	☐	
10	The last job above 4 feet had a plan workers can describe.	☐	☐	☐	

#	GAP FOUND	OWNER (ONE NAME)	DUE	VERIFIED

Rule: any “No” that is a live exposure gets stopped or contained before you leave the area. Stop is a right on this site. Restart is a decision. A named person makes it after the control is in place.

PREVENTION PLAYBOOK · FALLS, SLIPS, AND TRIPS

Who owns it

Owner / GM	Funds guardrails, gates, lifts, and fall protection in every bid.
Maintenance / project lead	Plans high work before it starts and owns ladder inventory.
Supervisor	Stops work at an unprotected edge and checks gates and covers.
Workers	Inspect gear and ladders, refuse an unprotected edge, and have the right to stop.
Safety lead	Maps every edge, hole, and roof access point and audits them quarterly.

How to verify it is working in the field

- Walk the site and list every edge, hole, roof hatch, and dock. Mark each protected or not.
- Inspect every ladder on site in one sweep. Count tagged versus in service.
- Ask a maintenance tech to walk you through the last high job, step by step.

TOOLBOX TALK STARTER

What was the last job you did above four feet, and what would have caught you?

Ask it at the job, not in the break room. Then listen. Write down what you hear and give it an owner before you leave.

IF YOU FIND A GAP

If an edge or hole is open, barricade it or post someone at it now. Pull a damaged ladder on the spot. Name the owner and date for the permanent fix. Then run the eight-step gap response at the front of this guide.

03

Contact with objects and equipment

1910.147, 1910.212 [GI] · 1910.176(b), 1910.178(m) [GI] · 1926.651, 1926.652 [CON]

756

contact incident deaths in 2024

357

struck by falling, flying, or swinging objects

213

struck, caught, or compressed by running powered equipment

THE PAIN POINT The conveyor jams four times a shift. Lockout takes ten minutes, so the crew clears it with the belt running. Everyone has done it. On the fifth jam, a sleeve catches. (illustrative)

What the data says

Source: BLS CFOI 2024, released Feb. 19, 2026. Contact incidents killed 756 workers in 2024. 357 were struck by a propelled, falling, or suspended object, including 282 struck by falling objects. 213 were struck, caught, or compressed by running powered equipment: 75 struck by rolling powered vehicles or machinery, 40 caught or entangled in running equipment, and 27 compressed between running equipment and another object. 80 died in collapses or engulfments, 18 of them in trenches or excavations. Natural resources and mining had 187 contact deaths and construction 161 (Table A-9).

Why it really happens

Not worker carelessness. These are the system and leadership conditions that make this predictable.

- Lockout is slow, so production clears jams with the power on.
- Guards come off for maintenance or jams and do not go back on.
- Loads are stacked high and loose, and people work under them.
- People work beside moving equipment with no separation.
- Trenches are opened without shoring because the box is not on site yet.

REQUIREMENTS AND CONTROLS · CONTACT WITH OBJECTS AND EQUIPMENT

What the rules require, in plain words

1910.147(c)(1), (c)(4) · GI · final	Isolate and lock out energy before servicing or maintenance where unexpected start-up could injure someone, using written, machine-specific procedures. Minor tool changes during normal production are exempt only if alternative measures give effective protection.
1910.212(a)(1) · GI · final	Guard machines to protect operators and others from hazards such as points of operation, in-running nip points, rotating parts, and flying chips.
1910.176(b) · GI · final	Stack, block, interlock, and limit the height of stored material so it cannot slide or collapse.
1910.178(m)(2) · GI · final	No one may stand or pass under the raised forks or load of a powered industrial truck.
1926.652(a)(1) · CON · final	Protect workers in excavations from cave-ins with a protective system, unless the excavation is in stable rock or less than 5 feet deep with no sign of a potential cave-in.

Paraphrased. Federal regulatory text checked on eCFR (current to Oct. 8, 2026) on Oct. 13, 2026. State-plan states may have different or additional rules. Tags: GI = general industry (29 CFR 1910). CON = construction (29 CFR 1926). BOTH = applies to both (the OSH Act, 29 CFR 1904). FMCSA = commercial motor vehicle drivers and carriers (49 CFR). STATE = one state's law. GUIDANCE = advisory; it is not a rule and cannot be cited by itself.

Controls that work, in hierarchy order

Eliminate	Design out the jam: fix the transfer point, change the product spec, add a jam-clearing tool that works from outside the guard.
Engineer	Interlocked guards, light curtains, lockable disconnects within reach of the job, rack netting, trench boxes, physical barriers between people and equipment.
Administrative	Machine-specific lockout procedures posted at the machine. Annual periodic inspection of each procedure. No one under suspended loads. Competent person signs before trench entry.
Leadership	Production targets that include time for lockout. Leaders ask how jams are cleared, and listen.
Small-shop fix	Time lockout on your most-jammed machine. If it takes more than a few minutes, fix the procedure and hardware so the safe way is the fast way.

Leaders own the conditions. If the control only works when someone is willing to argue with the schedule, it is not a control. Fatal events are where that argument is lost for good. Build it so the safe way is the normal way.

30-MINUTE SELF-AUDIT · PRINT AND TAKE TO THE FLOOR

03 · Contact with objects and equipment

SITE	AREA / JOB / CREW	AUDITOR	DATE
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#	CHECK WHAT YOU CAN SEE OR PUT YOUR HAND ON	YES	NO	N/A	NOTES
1	Machines have written, machine-specific lockout procedures at the point of use.	☐	☐	☐	
2	Workers clearing jams lock out first (watch one jam).	☐	☐	☐	
3	Guards are in place on points of operation, nip points, and rotating parts.	☐	☐	☐	
4	Interlocks work and are not bypassed.	☐	☐	☐	
5	Lockout procedures had a periodic inspection in the last 12 months.	☐	☐	☐	
6	Stored material is stable, blocked, and within height limits.	☐	☐	☐	
7	No one stands under suspended loads or raised forks.	☐	☐	☐	
8	People and moving equipment are separated by barriers or marked zones.	☐	☐	☐	
9	Trenches 5 feet or deeper have a protective system, inspected today.	☐	☐	☐	
10	Workers can explain how to lock out the machine in front of them.	☐	☐	☐	

#	GAP FOUND	OWNER (ONE NAME)	DUE	VERIFIED

Rule: any “No” that is a live exposure gets stopped or contained before you leave the area. Stop is a right on this site. Restart is a decision. A named person makes it after the control is in place.

PREVENTION PLAYBOOK · CONTACT WITH OBJECTS AND EQUIPMENT

Who owns it

Owner / GM	Funds guarding, lockout hardware, and fixes for chronic jams.
Operations manager	Sets targets that include lockout time; owns guarding.
Maintenance lead	Writes and inspects lockout procedures; restores guards.
Workers	Lock out every time, report bypassed guards, and have the right to stop.
Safety lead	Audits lockout and guarding monthly and investigates near misses.

How to verify it is working in the field

- Watch a jam being cleared on the most-jammed machine. Was it locked out?
- Walk the line and count missing or bypassed guards.
- Ask a worker to show the lockout points on their machine.

TOOLBOX TALK STARTER

What is the fastest way people clear a jam here, and is it the way the procedure says?

Ask it at the job, not in the break room. Then listen. Write down what you hear and give it an owner before you leave.

IF YOU FIND A GAP

If a guard is missing or a machine is being cleared live, lock it out now. Name the owner and date for the guard or the jam fix, and check sister machines. Then run the eight-step gap response at the front of this guide.

04 Violent acts

OSH Act 5(a)(1) [BOTH] · Cal. Labor Code 6401.9 [STATE] · OSHA 3148 [GUIDANCE] · OSHA suicide prevention [GUIDANCE]

733

deaths from violent acts in 2024

470

homicides, 64.1% of the group

263

suicides at work, 35.9% of the group

THE PAIN POINT **The night clerk works alone with cash and no lock on the back door. She asked twice for a second person after midnight. The request is in a manager's inbox.** (illustrative)

What the data says

Source: BLS CFI 2024, released Feb. 19, 2026. Violent acts killed 733 workers in 2024, down from 740. Homicides were 470 (64.1%), up from 458; 379 involved a shooting by another person. Suicides were 263 (35.9%), down from 281. Women were 8.1% of all work deaths but 15.3% (72) of homicide victims. Protective service occupations had 281 deaths, 97 of them homicides. The trade, transportation, and utilities sector had 136 homicides (Table A-9).

Why it really happens

Not worker carelessness. These are the system and leadership conditions that make this predictable.

- Front-line staff handle cash, angry customers, or bad news alone, especially at night.
- Physical layout gives no barrier, no locked door, and no way to call for help.
- Threats and warning signs are not reported because nothing happened last time.
- Supervisors are not trained to spot a coworker in crisis or to ask about it.
- Firearms, medications, and other means of self-harm are accessible at work with no thought given to it.

REQUIREMENTS AND CONTROLS · VIOLENT ACTS

What the rules require, in plain words

OSH Act 5(a)(1) · BOTH · final	OSHA states there are no specific OSHA standards for workplace violence. It can cite recognized violence hazards under the General Duty Clause.
Cal. Labor Code 6401.9 · STATE · final	Most California employers must have a written workplace violence prevention plan, training, a violent incident log, and reporting without retaliation (since July 1, 2024). Check your own state.
OSHA 3148 · GUIDANCE	OSHA's guidelines for healthcare and social service settings lay out a prevention program: leadership, worker involvement, worksite analysis, controls, training, and records.
OSHA suicide prevention · GUIDANCE	OSHA's workplace suicide prevention resources urge employers to talk about mental health, train supervisors to recognize warning signs, and share the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.
29 CFR 1904 · BOTH · final	Work-related deaths and injuries from violence are recordable and reportable like any other.

Paraphrased. Federal regulatory text checked on eCFR (current to Oct. 8, 2026) on Oct. 13, 2026. State-plan states may have different or additional rules. Tags: GI = general industry (29 CFR 1910). CON = construction (29 CFR 1926). BOTH = applies to both (the OSH Act, 29 CFR 1904). FMCSA = commercial motor vehicle drivers and carriers (49 CFR). STATE = one state's law. GUIDANCE = advisory; it is not a rule and cannot be cited by itself.

Controls that work, in hierarchy order

Eliminate	Reduce cash on hand, avoid lone late-night work, move high-conflict conversations away from the front counter.
Engineer	Locks on staff doors, barriers at counters, good lighting and sight lines, panic buttons, clear exits behind counters, cameras.
Administrative	Written prevention plan; threat reporting with no retaliation; check-ins for lone workers; de-escalation training; a practiced response plan.
Mental health	Supervisors trained to notice and ask; 988 and the employee assistance number posted where people see them; leaders who talk openly about mental health.
Small-shop fix	Ask front-line staff: when have you felt unsafe here? Fix the top answer this month. Put a lock on the staff door today.

Leaders own the conditions. If the control only works when someone is willing to argue with the schedule, it is not a control. Fatal events are where that argument is lost for good. Build it so the safe way is the normal way.

30-MINUTE SELF-AUDIT · PRINT AND TAKE TO THE FLOOR

04 · Violent acts

SITE	AREA / JOB / CREW	AUDITOR	DATE
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#	CHECK WHAT YOU CAN SEE OR PUT YOUR HAND ON	YES	NO	N/A	NOTES
1	There is a written workplace violence policy, and staff can describe it.	☐	☐	☐	
2	Staff-only areas have locks or controlled entry.	☐	☐	☐	
3	Front counters have a barrier or safe distance and a clear exit.	☐	☐	☐	
4	There is a fast way to call for help (panic button, code word, phone).	☐	☐	☐	
5	Lone and late-night workers have a check-in system or a second person.	☐	☐	☐	
6	Threats and warning signs are reported, logged, and acted on.	☐	☐	☐	
7	Staff who deal with the public have de-escalation training.	☐	☐	☐	
8	Supervisors have been trained to recognize and ask about suicide warning signs.	☐	☐	☐	
9	988 and the employee assistance number are posted where workers see them.	☐	☐	☐	
10	The last reported threat got a documented response.	☐	☐	☐	

#	GAP FOUND	OWNER (ONE NAME)	DUE	VERIFIED

Rule: any “No” that is a live exposure gets stopped or contained before you leave the area. Stop is a right on this site. Restart is a decision. A named person makes it after the control is in place.

PREVENTION PLAYBOOK · VIOLENT ACTS

Who owns it

Owner / GM	Funds physical security and second-person staffing where needed.
HR	Owens policy, threat reporting, employee assistance, and post-incident support.
Supervisor	Acts on warning signs, runs check-ins, and asks people how they are doing.
Workers	Report threats and concerns; have the right to leave an unsafe situation.
Safety lead	Runs the hazard assessment and incident log and reviews them quarterly.

How to verify it is working in the field

- Ask three front-line staff how they would call for help. Their answers should match.
- Test the panic button or code word and time the response.
- Ask a supervisor what they would say to a worker who seems in crisis.

TOOLBOX TALK STARTER**When have you felt unsafe at work here, and what would have helped?**

Ask it at the job, not in the break room. Then listen. Write down what you hear and give it an owner before you leave.

IF YOU FIND A GAP

If someone is at immediate risk, get them to safety and call for help (911, or 988 for a mental health crisis). Then fix the condition that left them exposed and name the owner and date. Then run the eight-step gap response at the front of this guide.

05 Exposure to harmful substances or environments

1910.146, 1910.147, 1910.333 [GI] · OSH Act 5(a)(1) heat [BOTH] · OSHA heat proposal [proposed] · OSHA 4519 [GUIDANCE]

687

exposure deaths in 2024, down 16.2%

410

unintentional drug or alcohol overdoses at work

130

deaths from exposure to electricity

THE PAIN POINT The tech goes into the tank to grab a dropped tool. The air was never tested because “it was only going to be a minute.” His partner climbs in after him.

(illustrative)

What the data says

Source: BLS CFI 2024, released Feb. 19, 2026. Exposure to harmful substances or environments killed 687 workers in 2024, down 16.2% from 820. The drop was driven by overdoses, which fell to 410 from 512 but were still 59.7% of the group. Exposure to electricity killed 130 (61 direct, 56 indirect contact). Temperature extremes killed 53, including 48 from environmental heat (40 outdoors). Inhalation of harmful substances killed 45, and oxygen deficiency 35, including 22 drownings. Construction had 187 deaths in this group, including 52 from electricity and 90 overdoses (Table A-9).

Why it really happens

Not worker carelessness. These are the system and leadership conditions that make this predictable.

- Confined spaces are entered without testing because the job looks short.
- Circuits are assumed dead instead of locked out and tested.
- Heat is treated as weather, not a hazard with a plan.
- Substance use is hidden because workers fear losing their job, and nobody is ready to respond to an overdose.
- Would-be rescuers enter the same atmosphere that dropped the first worker.

REQUIREMENTS AND CONTROLS · EXPOSURE TO HARMFUL SUBSTANCES OR ENVIRONMENTS

What the rules require, in plain words

1910.146 · GI · final	Permit-required confined spaces: evaluate spaces, test the atmosphere before entry (oxygen below 19.5% or above 23.5% is hazardous), use permits and attendants, and have a rescue plan that does not depend on untrained coworkers.
1910.333(a)(1) · GI · final · 1910.147 · GI · final	De-energize live parts before working on or near them unless that is infeasible or adds hazards; lock and tag, and verify the circuit is dead.
Heat · OSH Act 5(a)(1) · BOTH · final	There is no final federal OSHA heat standard. OSHA cites heat hazards under the General Duty Clause and runs a heat National Emphasis Program (CPL 03-00-024, Apr. 10, 2026). Some states (for example, California) have their own heat rules.
Heat rule · proposed	OSHA proposed a heat injury and illness prevention standard in August 2024. In September 2026 OSHA said it plans a supplemental proposal with another comment period. Not in force.
OSHA 4519 · GUIDANCE	OSHA's fact sheet advises employers to keep opioid overdose reversal medication (naloxone or nalmefene) on hand, train workers to recognize an overdose and use it, and call 911.

Paraphrased. Federal regulatory text checked on eCFR (current to Oct. 8, 2026) on Oct. 13, 2026. State-plan states may have different or additional rules. Tags: GI = general industry (29 CFR 1910). CON = construction (29 CFR 1926). BOTH = applies to both (the OSH Act, 29 CFR 1904). FMCSA = commercial motor vehicle drivers and carriers (49 CFR). STATE = one state's law. GUIDANCE = advisory; it is not a rule and cannot be cited by itself.

Controls that work, in hierarchy order

Eliminate	Do the work from outside the space; de-energize and ground; reschedule heavy outdoor work to cooler hours.
Engineer	Continuous air monitors, forced ventilation, retrieval systems for vertical entry, lockable disconnects, shade, cooling, and water stations.
Administrative	Entry permits and attendants; test-before-touch; heat plan with acclimatization for new and returning workers; naloxone in first-aid kits with trained responders.
Support	Employee assistance and a recovery-friendly approach so workers seek help before an overdose, not after.
Small-shop fix	Put naloxone in every first-aid kit this week and train two people per shift. Label every confined space and lock the ones nobody needs to enter.

Leaders own the conditions. If the control only works when someone is willing to argue with the schedule, it is not a control. Fatal events are where that argument is lost for good. Build it so the safe way is the normal way.

30-MINUTE SELF-AUDIT · PRINT AND TAKE TO THE FLOOR

05 · Exposure to harmful substances or environments

SITE	AREA / JOB / CREW	AUDITOR	DATE
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#	CHECK WHAT YOU CAN SEE OR PUT YOUR HAND ON	YES	NO	N/A	NOTES
1	Confined spaces are identified, labeled, and evaluated for permit requirements.	☐	☐	☐	
2	Atmosphere is tested before every permit-space entry, and results are on the permit.	☐	☐	☐	
3	Rescue for confined spaces does not depend on coworkers entering untrained.	☐	☐	☐	
4	Circuits are locked out and tested dead before work.	☐	☐	☐	
5	There is a written heat plan with water, rest, shade, and acclimatization.	☐	☐	☐	
6	New and returning workers get a heat acclimatization schedule.	☐	☐	☐	
7	Naloxone is in first-aid kits and at least two people per shift are trained.	☐	☐	☐	
8	Workers know the employee assistance number and how to get help confidentially.	☐	☐	☐	
9	Chemical inhalation hazards are assessed and controlled with ventilation first.	☐	☐	☐	
10	Workers can explain what they would do if a coworker collapsed in a space or the heat.	☐	☐	☐	

#	GAP FOUND	OWNER (ONE NAME)	DUE	VERIFIED

Rule: any “No” that is a live exposure gets stopped or contained before you leave the area. Stop is a right on this site. Restart is a decision. A named person makes it after the control is in place.

PREVENTION PLAYBOOK · EXPOSURE TO HARMFUL SUBSTANCES OR ENVIRONMENTS

Who owns it

Owner / GM	Funds monitors, ventilation, cooling, naloxone, and employee assistance.
Operations manager	Schedules heat-heavy work and confined space jobs with time for controls.
Supervisor	Signs permits, runs heat checks, and stops entry without testing.
Workers	Test, watch each other for heat and overdose signs, and have the right to stop.
Safety lead	Owens the confined space inventory, heat plan, and responder training.

How to verify it is working in the field

- Pick a confined space. Find the last entry permit and check the air test results.
- Check three first-aid kits for naloxone and ask who on shift is trained.
- On the next hot day, ask a new worker how long they have been acclimatizing.

TOOLBOX TALK STARTER

If your partner went down in a tank or in the heat, what would you do in the first 30 seconds?

Ask it at the job, not in the break room. Then listen. Write down what you hear and give it an owner before you leave.

IF YOU FIND A GAP

If anyone is entering a space without testing or working on a live circuit without lockout, stop it now. Name the owner and date for the permit, heat, or naloxone fix. Then run the eight-step gap response at the front of this guide.

06 Fires and explosions

1910.106, 1910.252, 1910.157 [GI] · 1910.38, 1910.39 [GI] · 1910.119 [GI]

93

deaths from fires and explosions in 2024

56

explosions

30

explosions of pressure vessels, piping, or tires

THE PAIN POINT **A welder cuts a bracket off a drum that “used to” hold solvent. Nobody checked it. The drum lid travels forty feet.** (illustrative)

What the data says

Source: BLS CFOI 2024, released Feb. 19, 2026. Fires and explosions killed 93 workers in 2024, down from 104. 56 died in explosions: 30 from pressure vessels, piping, or tires, and 21 from explosions of non-pressurized vapors, gases, or liquids. 37 died in fires without an explosion, 16 of them structural fires. The numbers are small next to vehicles and falls, but a single event can kill several people at once.

Why it really happens

Not worker carelessness. These are the system and leadership conditions that make this predictable.

- Hot work happens near combustibles, or on containers that once held flammables, without a permit.
- Flammable liquids are stored in open containers or the wrong cabinets.
- Pressure vessels, piping, and tires are serviced without releasing stored energy.
- Dust and residue build up because cleaning is cut when staff is short.
- Fire watches end early because the welder has the next job.

REQUIREMENTS AND CONTROLS · FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS

What the rules require, in plain words

1910.252(a) · GI · final	Hot work: move the work or the combustibles, or guard them. Where combustibles are within 35 feet, use a fire watch that stays at least 30 minutes after the work, and get the area inspected and authorized before cutting or welding.
1910.106 · GI · final	Store and handle flammable liquids in approved containers, cabinets, and rooms, with ventilation and ignition control.
1910.147 · GI · final	Release, restrain, or dissipate stored energy (pressure, springs, hydraulics) before servicing.
1910.157 · GI · final	Where portable extinguishers are provided for employee use, mount them, keep them accessible, inspect them monthly, maintain them annually, and train employees to use them.
1910.119 · GI · final	Facilities with highly hazardous chemicals above threshold quantities must run a process safety management program.
1910.38, 1910.39 · GI · final	When required, have emergency action and fire prevention plans; written unless 10 or fewer employees.

Paraphrased. Federal regulatory text checked on eCFR (current to Oct. 8, 2026) on Oct. 13, 2026. State-plan states may have different or additional rules. Tags: GI = general industry (29 CFR 1910). CON = construction (29 CFR 1926). BOTH = applies to both (the OSH Act, 29 CFR 1904). FMCSA = commercial motor vehicle drivers and carriers (49 CFR). STATE = one state's law. GUIDANCE = advisory; it is not a rule and cannot be cited by itself.

Controls that work, in hierarchy order

Eliminate	Replace hot work with cold cutting or bolted joints. Remove containers that once held flammables from the work area.
Substitute	Use less-flammable solvents and smaller quantities.
Engineer	Flammable storage cabinets, ventilation, grounding and bonding, tire cages, pressure-relief devices, dust collection.
Administrative	Hot work permit with a 35-foot sweep and a 30-minute fire watch. Container cleaning and testing before hot work. Housekeeping schedule with an owner.
Small-shop fix	Write a one-page hot work permit this week and require it for every job outside the weld booth.

Leaders own the conditions. If the control only works when someone is willing to argue with the schedule, it is not a control. Fatal events are where that argument is lost for good. Build it so the safe way is the normal way.

30-MINUTE SELF-AUDIT · PRINT AND TAKE TO THE FLOOR

06 · Fires and explosions

SITE	AREA / JOB / CREW	AUDITOR	DATE
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#	CHECK WHAT YOU CAN SEE OR PUT YOUR HAND ON	YES	NO	N/A	NOTES
1	Hot work outside designated areas has a permit, signed before work starts.	☐	☐	☐	
2	Combustibles within 35 feet are moved or covered before hot work.	☐	☐	☐	
3	A fire watch stays at least 30 minutes after hot work ends.	☐	☐	☐	
4	Containers are cleaned and tested before any hot work on them.	☐	☐	☐	
5	Flammable liquids are in approved containers and cabinets.	☐	☐	☐	
6	Stored energy is released before servicing pressure systems or tires.	☐	☐	☐	
7	Tires are inflated in a cage or with a clip-on chuck and remote valve.	☐	☐	☐	
8	Dust and residue are cleaned on schedule.	☐	☐	☐	
9	Extinguishers are mounted, inspected monthly, and workers know how to use them.	☐	☐	☐	
10	Workers know the alarm and evacuation route.	☐	☐	☐	

#	GAP FOUND	OWNER (ONE NAME)	DUE	VERIFIED

Rule: any “No” that is a live exposure gets stopped or contained before you leave the area. Stop is a right on this site. Restart is a decision. A named person makes it after the control is in place.

PREVENTION PLAYBOOK · FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS

Who owns it

Owner / GM	Funds cabinets, ventilation, tire cages, and housekeeping time.
Maintenance lead	Owens the hot work permit and stored-energy procedures.
Supervisor	Signs permits, assigns fire watches, and checks storage.
Workers	Refuse hot work without a permit, and have the right to stop.
Safety lead	Audits permits and storage; runs the fire prevention plan.

How to verify it is working in the field

- Pull the last five hot work permits. Was the fire watch time recorded?
- Walk the shop for open flammable containers and improper storage.
- Watch a tire being inflated. Is it caged or restrained?

TOOLBOX TALK STARTER

What here could catch fire or blow up today, and what is keeping it from happening?

Ask it at the job, not in the break room. Then listen. Write down what you hear and give it an owner before you leave.

IF YOU FIND A GAP

If hot work is running without a permit or fire watch, stop it now. Name the owner and date for the permit system and storage fix. Then run the eight-step gap response at the front of this guide.

CHECK OUR WORK

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FREE FIELD TOOL · NEXT STEP

ONE TASK. SEVEN MINUTES.

The free 7-Minute Safety Walk is a one-page field tool. Pick one task running right now. Name the energy that could kill: the vehicle, the height, the machine, the live circuit. Find the control you can put your hand on, and compare it to what the paper claims. It is the fastest way to find out whether the fixes in this guide are working at your site today.

Get the free 7-Minute Safety Walk →

thewaysofsafety.com/walk



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