



# Trade Release

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[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

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## **OSHA schedules stakeholder meetings to discuss occupational exposure to infectious diseases**

WASHINGTON – The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has scheduled two informal stakeholder [meetings](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-07-05/html/2011-16742.htm) (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-07-05/html/2011-16742.htm>) to solicit comments on exposure to infectious diseases in the workplace. OSHA will use information gathered during these meetings to explore the possible development of a proposed rule to protect workers from occupational exposure to infectious agents in healthcare settings where direct patient care is provided and other settings where workers perform tasks with occupational exposure. Both meetings are scheduled for July 29 in Washington, D.C.

On May 6, 2010, OSHA published a Request for Information on Infectious Diseases. OSHA wanted to gather comments on strategies that are currently used to reduce the risk of workplace exposure to infectious agents, and to more accurately distinguish the nature and extent of occupationally-acquired infectious diseases. Based on responses received and an ongoing review of literature on this subject, OSHA is considering development of a proposed program standard to control worker exposures to infectious agents.

“We know that workers in healthcare and related facilities may be exposed to infectious agents, and they deserve to be protected,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. “Information gained from these meetings will help us determine the best approach to assure that workers don’t put themselves at risk while caring for patients and doing their job. After all, a good job is a healthy and safe job.”

The two meetings will be held July 29, from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave., N.W., Room N-4437, Washington, DC 20210. To participate in one of the stakeholder meetings, or be a nonparticipating observer, individuals must submit a notice of intent electronically, by facsimile or by hard copy no later than July 22. See the Federal Register notice for details.

Meeting discussions will focus on issues including the advantages and disadvantages of using a program standard to limit occupational exposure to infectious diseases; whether and to what extent an OSHA standard should require employers to develop a written worker infection control plan that documents how employers will implement infection control measures to protect workers; and whether and to what extent OSHA should take alternative approaches to rulemaking to improve compliance with current infection control guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and other authoritative agencies.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA’s role is to ensure these conditions for America’s working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.

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