



# An Introduction to Recordable Injuries

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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to track recordable work injuries and report a summary of those numbers to them every year. This is designed to help maintain workplace safety and protect workers on the job, so that workers have the assurance of a safe workplace and employers can keep their workers healthy and productive. It also offers a way for OSHA to maintain records and evaluate systems and processes that lead to employee injuries, and institute safety procedures to reduce the risk of future incidents.

Navigating OSHA's recordable regulations can be overwhelming, so we've prepared a short guide to help you get started. After completing this guide, you may want to refer back to OSHA's recordable regulations to get the specific details you need for your business. You may also want to consult your occupational medicine provider for additional help or insight into managing recordables.

## What Are Recordables?

Recordables<sup>1</sup> are work-related injuries that:

- Need medical treatment beyond first aid
- Require time off work
- Require a job transfer or a restricted duty plan
- Cause loss of consciousness or death
- Involve a cut from something contaminated

"Work-related" also doesn't mean that the injury only

happens in the workplace. Injuries can also be work-related if something at work made a pre-existing condition worse.

However, not every injury or illness that becomes symptomatic at work occurring at work is a recordable. Injuries caused by natural disasters aren't recordables. Colds aren't recordable. If an employee becomes injured eating their lunch or doing personal grooming or intentionally hurts themselves at work, that also isn't recordable.

## Needing medical treatment beyond first aid

Some employers worry that an injured employee seeing a clinician automatically makes their injury recordable. Clinicians can provide more than first aid treatment, so this may seem reasonable on the surface—but the reality is that having a work comp savvy clinician evaluate injured employees can actually help prevent unnecessary recordables. Why? Clinicians who are trained in occupational medicine know OSHA's regulations and understand causation, and appreciate what constitutes a recordable. As experts in medicine and regulations, they know exactly what to look for in an employee injury and how it needs to be treated. If it needs to be a recordable, they'll tell you. If it doesn't, they'll make sure your employee gets the care they need to get back to work safely—including providing first aid.

A few examples of first aid<sup>2</sup> that can be provided offsite and onsite are:

- Using non-prescription medication at non-prescription strength
- Using a sling while transporting an accident victim
- Using an eye patch

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<sup>1</sup> For a full list, see 1904.7(b)(1) on OSHA.gov

- Removing splinters with tweezers
- Using a band aid or gauze pad

## How to Minimize the Impact of Recordables

Developing a plan is the first step in minimizing the impact of recordables. The most effective plans will be developed for your industry and workforce, using what you know about your organization and your industry—as well as your knowledge of OSHA recordable regulations. Before starting with general best practices, consider the type of injuries you’ve often seen in your workforce, your workplace, or seen reported in your industry.

In oil and gas, this may be slip and fall injuries. In construction, this may be falling objects or silica exposure.

### Ask yourself:

- What does the Department of Labor report as the most common injuries in my industry?
- What are the most common injuries I see in my workforce today?
- What kind of safety program do I currently have in place?
- Is my safety program working effectively? Why or why not?
- How is my occupational health provider helping me reduce recordables?

After determining common injuries in your industry and looking at your plan today, make sure your plan includes general best practices for reducing recordables: work with trained occupational medicine clinicians and educate your employees.<sup>3</sup>

## Work with trained occupational medicine clinicians

Trained occupational medicine clinicians can make a huge difference when it comes to keeping your workers safe and healthy, and minimizing recordables. It’s not just about when an injury should or shouldn’t be treated with first aid. They know the rules and regulations that make a recordable a recordable in the first place. They’ve worked with organizations just like yours to reduce recordables, and know what works and what doesn’t.

Additionally, occupational medicine clinicians treat employees not just as patients, but also as industrial athletes. They’re focused on treatment plans that get injured employees back in the game—and at work—as soon as appropriate. Because they’re trained in occupational medicine, they also diagnose and treat work-related injuries and illnesses much more effectively. Most occupational medicine clinicians have a deep understanding of OSHA guidelines so that they can most create effective treatment plans and help you stay compliant with regulations. They can also use this expertise to help keep recordables down by telling you exactly what is and isn’t safe for an employee to do.

For example, let’s say one of your employees gets hurt at work and goes to see your occupational medicine provider. The injury isn’t very serious and can be easily treated with first aid. The clinician examines your employee and treats them with first aid. Because the clinician has worked with your employees before and knows the tasks that employee’s job requires, they tell the employee that they can return to work right away without any job restrictions. You’ve provided a report with their recommendation.

However, your employee goes to see another

<sup>2</sup> This list isn’t comprehensive. For a full list, see 1904.7(b)(5)(ii) on OSHA.gov

<sup>3</sup> For these and other best practices on safely reducing recordables, read this article from Industrial Safety & Hygiene News.



doctor afterward. That doctor says they aren't fit for work and should take time off. As a result, the employee stays home from work—even though the occupational medicine clinician said they were fit for duty.

### Is this a recordable or not?

Answer: it's up to you. OSHA says that "if you receive recommendations from two or more physicians or licensed health care professionals, you may make a decision as to which recommendation is the most authoritative, and record the case based on that recommendation."<sup>4</sup> Having an occupational medicine clinician available to act as that authority can help you reduce unnecessary recordables, while having the assurance that you're keeping your workers safe.

### Educate your employees

This is just as important as partnering with an occupational medicine provider. You want your employees to be safe, and one of the best ways to do that is to get them fully engaged in injury prevention at work. Have regular safety trainings and post reminders about safe behaviors around your workplace. If special equipment is required for them to safely do their jobs, make sure they have it and know how to use it safely. This may require special onsite training or special physical exams (like respirator fit physicals) to ensure the equipment is fully effective.

It's also important to educate them about the importance of return-to-work programs and staying active as much as it's safe when they're recovering from an injury. Many employees are reluctant to return to work after an injury. They're often worried that they'll get hurt again or that working will make their pain worse. A few may view an injury as an opportunity to avoid working and extend disability.

These employees typically don't know that returning

to work benefits them, not just your business. It's not just a professional benefit, either. Staying active and keeping a regular routine positively impacts their self-image, relationships with family and friends, and can even help them recover faster. One recent study found that a long-term absence from normal routines, including work, can severely impact health, equivalent to smoking 10 packs of cigarettes a day and a 20% increased risk of death.<sup>5</sup>

### Conclusion

Recordables can have a big impact on your organization, but there are steps you can take to protect your employees and your business. Knowing the regulations, what constitutes a recordable, and common injuries in your workplace and industry will help you create a plan to reduce recordables. Partnering with an occupational medicine provider can make that plan even more effective by leveraging the regulatory and medical expertise of work health clinicians.

### About Concentra

Concentra is a national health care company focused on improving the health of America's workers, one patient at a time. Through its affiliated clinicians, the company provides occupational medicine, urgent care, physical therapy, and wellness services from more than 450 retail and work-site facilities in 38 states. Through this complement of services, Concentra intends to raise the standard of health by putting individuals first, treating them with clinical excellence, and focusing on their ongoing well-being. To learn more about Concentra, visit [www.concentra.com](http://www.concentra.com).

### Contact an Expert

Talk to us if you have questions about recordables and how Concentra can help you control them. We're here to help you get started.

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<sup>4</sup> OSHA.gov, 1904.7(b)(3)(ii)

<sup>5</sup> Waddell G, Burton AK (2006) Is Work Good for Your Health and Well-Being? London: TSO.