

Recordkeeping 101: Part 5

Injury or illness?

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Editor's note: This is the fifth 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, to people who might be unfamiliar with the 2002 recordkeeping changes and to people who want to review their recordkeeping practices. This installment deals with classifying cases as either injuries and illnesses. The prior installments are available at www.doli.state.mn.us/recordkeeping.html.

This installment is about classifying cases as either injuries or illnesses (OSHA log columns M1 through M6). Previous installments of this series discussed basic OSHA recordkeeping requirements; the process for classifying cases as either days away from work, job transfer or restriction, or other recordable cases; counting days for days-away-from-work cases and cases with job transfer or restriction; and describing injury characteristics.

The formal title of the OSHA log is “Log of work-related injuries and illnesses.” Employers classify each case as either an injury or illness in columns M1 through M6 (see figure below). Each case needs to have a check in *only one* of the columns. There is one column for injuries (M1), four columns for specific illness types (M2 through M5) and one column for any illness not included in the other columns (M6). Employers are instructed to check the injury or illness category that best fits the circumstances of the case.

Check the "injury" column or choose one type of illness:					
(M)					
Injury	Skin disorder	Respiratory condition	Poisoning	Hearing loss	All other illnesses
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

Column M1 — Injury

An injury is any wound or damage to the body resulting from an event in the work environment. Some common injury types are: cut, abrasion,



fracture and burn. Sprain and strain injuries to muscles, joints and connective tissues are classified as injuries when they result from a slip, trip, fall or other similar accidents.

Column M2—Skin diseases or disorders

Skin diseases or disorders are illnesses involving the worker’s skin that are caused by work exposure to chemicals, plants or other substances. Some examples are: contact dermatitis, eczema and rashes caused by primary irritants.

Column M3—Respiratory conditions

Respiratory conditions are illnesses associated with breathing hazardous biological agents, chemicals, dust, gases, vapors or fumes at work. Some examples are: pneumonitis, tuberculosis, occupational asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), toxic inhalation injury, such as metal fume fever, and chronic obstructive bronchitis.

Column M4—Poisoning

Poisoning includes disorders evidenced by abnormal concentrations of toxic substances in blood, other tissues, other bodily fluids or the breath that are caused by the ingestion or absorption of toxic substances into the body. Some examples are: poisoning by lead, mercury, cadmium or other metals; poisoning by carbon monoxide, hydrogen

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sulfide or other gases; poisoning by benzene, carbon tetrachloride or other organic solvents; poisoning by insecticide sprays, such as parathion or lead arsenate; poisoning by other chemicals, such as formaldehyde, plastics and resins.

Column M5—Hearing loss

Noise-induced hearing loss is defined as a change in hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 decibels or more in either ear at 2,000, 3,000 and 4,000 hertz, and the employee's total hearing level is 25 decibels or more above audiometric zero in the same ear(s). There is more detailed information about hearing loss available on the OSHA recordkeeping Web site at www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/hearinglossflowchart.pdf.

Column M6—All other occupational illnesses

Use this column only for illnesses that cannot be classified in one of the other categories. Some examples of other illnesses are: heatstroke, heat exhaustion, freezing, frostbite, effects of welding flash, anthrax and bloodborne pathogenic diseases, such as AIDS, HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. If still unsure about the classification, employers could use the longstanding distinction between

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(651) 284-5050
1-877-470-6742

Workplace Safety Consultation (WSC)

(651) 284-5060
1-800-657-3776

Recordkeeping packet

(651) 284-5042
1-800-342-5354

cases that result from instantaneous events or exposures in the work environment (injuries) and all other cases (illnesses).

Regardless of whether a case is considered an injury or an illness, it is only a recordable case if it results in death, loss of consciousness, days away from work, restricted work activity or job transfer, medical treatment beyond first aid or if it meets any of the additional criteria (see the first article in this series). 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.

Remember to update the log when new information about an illness or injury becomes available.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Federal OSHA recordkeeping resources

- www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/index.html

MNOSHA recordkeeping resources

- www.doli.state.mn.us/recordkeeping.html

MNOSHA WSC recordkeeping training

- www.doli.state.mn.us/osseven.html

Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses

- www.bls.gov/iif
- www.doli.state.mn.us/dlistats.html

Packet of recordkeeping forms, instructions

- www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/RKforms.html

Booklet: Minnesota OSHA recordkeeping requirement

- www.doli.state.mn.us/pdf/recordkeepingstandard.pdf

