

Bush Administration Puts Worker Safety and Health in Deep Freeze

Since taking office in January 2001, the Bush administration has turned its back on workers and workplace safety. Siding with its corporate friends, the administration has overturned or blocked dozens of important workplace protections and weakened job safety programs, leaving workers in danger. Here are some of the highlights of the Bush Administration's long record of failure on workplace safety:

- **Killed Workplace Ergonomic Protections** - The Bush administration started its assault on worker safety soon after taking office joining with anti-worker business groups to repeal OSHA's ergonomics standard. The standard, 10 years in the making, would have required employers to protect workers from the nation's biggest job safety problem - injuries caused by heavy lifting and repetitive work. The administration's promised "comprehensive plan" to address ergonomic hazards has turned out to be a sham. In 3 years, only one voluntary non-enforceable guideline - for nursing homes- has been issued.
- **Repealed Recordkeeping for Ergonomic Injuries** - Adding insult to injury, the Bush administration repealed the OSHA rule requiring musculoskeletal disorders to be identified on the workplace injury log. Instead of requiring hazards to be eliminated, they are hoping reports of injuries will simply disappear.
- **Shut Down All New Workplace Safety and Health Rules** - The Bush administration killed dozens of worker protection measures under development at OSHA and MSHA, including rules on cancer causing substances, reactive chemicals, and infectious diseases such as TB. They have even refused to issue a rule requiring employers to pay for personal protective equipment, particularly important for immigrant and low wage workers. This Bush administration has the worst record on safety rules in OSHA's entire history, with no plans to issue any new rules during its 4 year term.
- **Favored Employer Voluntary Programs over Enforcement and Excluded Workers and Unions** - The administration has made expanding voluntary programs and outreach to employers a top priority. Bush's OSHA has set up partnerships and alliances with dozens of employers, largely excluding unions.

Union representatives critical of the administration have been removed from all agency advisory committees in an attempt to silence opposition.

- **Tried to Dismantle Worker Safety and Health Training Programs** – While expanding outreach to employers, the Bush administration has tried to gut the training and education programs for workers, proposing to slash the worker training budget by 75% and eliminate funding for union run programs. Thus far, unions have successfully fought these cuts, but the administration's efforts to eliminate these important worker programs continue.
- **Appointed an Industry Anti-ergo Leader as DOL's Chief Lawyer** – A few weeks after killing the OSHA ergonomics standard, the President nominated Eugene Scalia, one of the leaders of the industry campaign to kill the ergonomics standard, as the chief lawyer at the Department of Labor. Scalia called ergonomics "quackery" and "junk science" and claimed workers injuries weren't real.
- **Moved to Slash the Job Safety Budget** – For 3 years straight President Bush proposed to cut the OSHA, MSHA and NIOSH budgets, reducing money for enforcement and standards programs in favor of voluntary assistance programs for employers. Due to the unions' efforts, the Congress has rejected these proposed cuts and maintained the budgets for the job safety agencies.

American workers need a President who puts workers, not employers, first and protects safety and health, not corporate interests.

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Please contact the AFL-CIO Safety and Health Department
if you have questions about this fact sheet or need additional information
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