

## WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH

### PROPOSED SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

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STATE OF WASHINGTON  
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT  
AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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## Workplace Safety and Health Programs

Across the country, laws and regulations are in place to help businesses and workers maintain safe work environments for employees. These requirements address avoidance of both workplace injuries and illnesses.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 1970 establishes minimum workplace safety and health standards. The federal legislation gives states the option of having their own workplace safety and health programs.

### Why a JLARC Study of Washington's Workplace Safety and Health?

In Washington, the state administers a workplace safety and health program, which includes workplace inspections and consultation visits, training for employers and employees, and outreach activities. In the 2011-13 Operating Budget (2ESHB 1087), the Legislature directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to review the state's workplace safety and health program.

### Washington Administers Its Own Workplace Safety and Health Program

A state program must be at least as effective as the federal program, and the federal government maintains oversight and monitoring of state enforcement activities. Absent a state program, the federal government enforces the federal standards.

Washington is one of 25 states (and two territories) that administer their own workplace safety and health programs. Our state's standards are embodied in the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA) of 1973.

### The Department of Labor and Industries Administers WISHA through the Division of Occupational Safety and Health

WISHA gives the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) primary responsibility for overseeing workplace safety and health. The Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSHA) within L&I administers WISHA. As the administrator, DOSHA carries out this responsibility by conducting inspections and free consultations, and providing compliance assistance to businesses.

In Fiscal Year 2010, DOSHA operating expenditures totaled \$36.0 million (\$29.3M State; \$6.7M Federal). These expenditures represented 12 percent of L&I's total operating expenditures of \$290.3 million.

## Study Scope

The study will focus on the Division of Occupational Safety and Health's (DOSH) safety and health inspection process, consultations, and compliance assistance opportunities for businesses. The study will describe the activities conducted by DOSH and identify the strategies used in Washington to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses. The study will also compare Washington's injury and illness rates to rates in other states and to the federal program.

## Study Objectives

- 1) How does Washington's occupational safety and health program compare to programs in other states with state plans and to the federal program?
- 2) How do Washington workplace injury and illness rates compare to rates in other states with state plans and to the federal program?
- 3) What does research show about the impact of inspections and compliance assistance on workplace injury and illness rates?
- 4) How does Washington's occupational safety and health program determine where to focus its inspection and compliance assistance efforts?
- 5) How can a Washington business or worker find out about and access compliance assistance activities offered by the Division of Occupational Safety and Health?

## Timeframe for the Study

Staff will present the preliminary and final reports at the JLARC meetings in April and May 2012, respectively.

## JLARC Staff Contact for the Study

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