

OSHA initiating hazmat inspection program in Nebraska

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The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration said it is launching a "local emphasis program" in Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri for inspections of industries known to use hazardous chemicals and which have reported the release of such chemicals to the Environmental Protection Agency. The goal is to reduce occupational illnesses and deaths, the agency said.

Local emphasis programs are special enforcement plans at the regional or area office levels. OSHA said these programs are intended to address hazards in industries that pose a particular risk to workers in the office's jurisdiction.

Marcia Drumm, acting regional administrator for OSHA in Kansas City, said OSHA will improve education for company management and strengthen protections for workers exposed to these chemicals.

Chemicals reported to the EPA that have been released into the environment include ammonia; barium, chromium and copper compounds; hydrochloric acid; hydrogen fluoride; lead and manganese compounds; N-hexane; styrene; sulfuric acid; and nitrate, vanadium and zinc compounds.

Industries will be selected for inspection based on site-specific chemical release data from the EPA's TRI Explorer database, which lists industry establishments that have released chemical quantities equal to or exceeding 100,000 pounds, OSHA said.

The agency said it has created a toolkit to identify safer chemicals that can be used in place of more hazardous ones. The toolkit is available at www.osha.gov/dsg/safer_chemicals/index.html.