

# COVID-19/U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General: Report to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration



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The United States Department of Labor Office of Inspector General (“OIG”) issued a February 25th report titled:

*COVID-19: Increased Worksite Complaints and Reduced OSHA Inspections Leave U.S. Workers’ Safety at Increased Risk (“Report”)*

The *Report* was transmitted to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (“OSHA”). See Report No. 19-21-003-10-105.

OIG states that it prepared the *Report* because of the following:

- Specific worker health and safety concerns related to COVID-19
- Need to review measures OSHA has taken to ensure employers mitigate employees’ risk of exposure
- Increase in receipt of complaints by OSHA and Congress, labor unions and the media requesting swift action

OIG states that the question the *Report* is intended to answer is:

What plans and guidance has OSHA developed to address challenges created by COVID-19, and to what extent have these challenges affected OSHA’s ability to protect the safety of workers and its workforce?

OIG states in the *Report* that it determined:

- OSHA has taken actions, including issuance of guidance in response to COVID-19
- Reduction of on-site inspections subject employees to greater safety risks (15% more complaints in 2020 but 50% fewer inspections)
- Increased risk that OSHA is not providing the level of protection workers need at various job sites
- Remote OSHA inspections because of COVID-19 may have resulted in some workplace hazards going unidentified and/or unabated longer (noting OSHA’s onsite presence during inspections historically resulted in timely mitigation efforts)
- OSHA has issued several guidance documents to enhance safety because of COVID-19
- Guidance is not enforceable (as opposed to rules or standards)
- OSHA has not issued an emergency temporary standard related to COVID-19 for airborne infectious diseases which may better protect employees

The OIG recommendations to OSHA in the *Report* address:

- Onsite inspections
- Remote inspections guidance
- Emergency temporary standard for infectious diseases

A link to the *Report* can be found [here](#).