



Weekly Safety Tip

**10 Current EHS Issues
with Significant
Impact?**



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Per Dave Johnson, these topics are expected to be top of mind in the next few years

The next three years leading up to the 2028 presidential election will be marked by unpredictable national and local politics, precedent-setting legal cases, domestic and international economic uncertainties, global unrest and continued social divisions. It presents a window to look at how the world turns in environmental health and safety. Here are ten developments to track.

1. OSHA's "4 Es"

First up is OSHA's role in this de-regulatory climate. We're going to see OSHA's leadership lean into what I'll call OSHA's "4 Es" or roles — **engager**, **educator**, **enabler** and **enforcer**.

Here's the engagement potential: In 2024, Google's AI says 22 million users visited OSHA's website. This is far, far greater engagement that OSHA achieves through inspections or comments on standard proposals. Plus, these 22 million visitors include millions from small companies that OSHA rarely "touches."

Technology, specifically artificial intelligence, will expand and enhance OSHA's educational offerings. Scores of safety and health topics, issues and concerns will be searched by professionals using generative AI for almost instant identification of very specific queries. And imagine if AI becomes accurate enough and OSHA has the money enough to develop OSHA chatbots for Q&As.

Bottom line: OSHA's website will move from being passive to being interactive.

The value of putting money into making OSHA an enabler, an educator and engager, is that it makes OSHA more relevant. The agency will become more positive (a theme of *Safety Differently*). It will provide more context for topics and more capacity in terms of resources (another *Safety Differently* theme) and it allows OSHA to avoid the pendulum swing of politics that causes the agency to be slow-moving, controversial, biased, unpredictable and increasingly irrelevant. Who can argue against OSHA promoting engagement, education, enabling proactive activities — as long as it retains its enforcement responsibility?

2. VPP expands.

The second development is also OSHA-related . . . OSHA's mindset in 2025 is that it's time to modernize, expand, and enhance the pathways to VPP status. OSHA has been thinking this way for years, has asked for ideas, and the new Labor Secretary and OSHA's new front office will make VPP expansion more of a priority.

The number of VPP sites has stalled at about 2200 sites since 2008. Last year there were 1854 federal and state sites. The all-time high was 2,436 sites in 2010. Here are ways VPP could grow:

- Outsourcing: Increase the use of Special Government Employees (SGEs) and third parties, such as CSPs, to supplement OSHA's application review efforts
- Use independent workplace safety and health auditors (consultants) to supplement the agency's resources in a third-party audit program to perform VPP reviews
- Partnerships: Increased collaboration with professional organizations
- Marketing: Increased public recognition for VPP companies and sites
- Targeted recruiting: Use AI analytics to comb data to recruit companies identified to be in compliance with consensus standards, such as ANSI/ASSP Z10 or ISO 45001
- Self-audits: OSHA recently announced that it was promoting the value of and allowing workplaces interested in VPP to conduct self-audits to prove their aspirations. These companies would enter VPP at a lower, less mature level of program development if they demonstrate a documented and audited commitment to continuous improvement of safety and health.

Weekly Safety Share



**Fentanyl Positivity is Seven
Times (7x) Higher in Random
Tests vs. Pre-Employment
Screening**

Fentanyl Positivity is Seven Times (7x) Higher in Random Tests vs. Pre-Employment Screening



A report from Quest Diagnostics notes that "employees are turning to a dangerous drug like fentanyl after they've passed a pre-employment drug screen, putting the overall wellness of the workforce at risk."

On September 2, the [2025 Quest Diagnostics Drug Testing Index](#) revealed that the percentage of employees in the general U.S. workforce testing positive for fentanyl in random drug tests far exceeded those in pre-employment testing.

While the analysis of more than 8 million drug tests shows that **overall workplace urine drug positivity declined slightly last year, to 4.4% from 4.6%**, the sharp increase in fentanyl in random drug checks suggests more workers are using the highly addictive opioid after they have passed pre-employment screens. Random drug testing involves unscheduled and unannounced drug tests of employed individuals after they have presumably passed pre-employment drug screens.

In 2024, **workforce positivity for fentanyl was 707% higher in random tests (1.13%) compared to pre-employment tests (0.14%)**. This is a stark contrast to other categories of drugs, such as marijuana or other opiates, where less variation is seen in random and pre-employment positivity rates.

For example, in the general U.S. workforce, marijuana's positivity rate in random testing was 42% lower than its positivity rate in pre-employment testing over the past five years.

In contrast, the fentanyl positivity rate in random testing has been 400% higher than in pre-employment testing over the past five years.

In addition, 60% of specimens positive for fentanyl in the U.S. general workforce in 2024 were also found to be positive for other drugs. About 22% of fentanyl-positive workforce drug tests were also positive for marijuana, a rate that has doubled since 2020, when only 10% of fentanyl positives were also positive for marijuana. A large percentage of fentanyl positives were also found to be positive for amphetamines – 16% in 2024 compared to 11% in 2020.

In a report from Denver 7, ABC News, Dr. Rob Valuck, with the Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention at the CU School of Pharmacy, noted that due to the prevalence of fentanyl, there have been regulatory changes. He said that **all labs that do federal workplace testing now have to include fentanyl in their testing panels**. He also said the Department of Transportation - **DOT is working to make the same kind of change**.

And on July 7, 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services - **DHHS Federal Drug-Free Workplace Program added fentanyl to the authorized drug testing panel**.

"It is disturbing to see increased use of fentanyl on-the-job and in combination with other drugs, given fentanyl's extreme potency, which can increase risk of impairment, accidents, and potential overdose," said Suhash Harwani, PhD, senior director of science for Workforce Health Solutions at Quest Diagnostics, in a statement, "It also raises concern that employees are turning to a dangerous drug like fentanyl after they've passed a pre-employment drug screen, putting the overall wellness of the workforce at risk."

A [January 2025 CDC report](#) suggests a slight increase in fatal overdoses in January 2025 compared to January 2024 following consecutive years of decline. Fentanyl has since proliferated in the U.S. and **most overdose deaths – 7 out of 10 – are estimated to involve illegally manufactured fentanyl (IMFs)**, [according to the CDC](#).



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